

EBAY TIPS & TRICKS EXPOSED

**How to
make real
profits**

THE INDEPENDENT GUIDE TO

eBay 2016

**HOW TO MAKE SERIOUS
MONEY ON EBAY**

**EBAY ADD-ONS
TESTED
& RATED**

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO BUYING AND SELLING



Welcome!

Thinking of diving into the exciting world of eBay but not quite sure where to start? You've come to the right place. You're holding in your hands a thorough guide to everything you need to know about the online marketplace: from how it started to how it can help you, from making your first bid on an exciting item to setting up your own eBay shop.

Online shopping is a big deal right now, with online-only retailers on the verge of becoming more popular than real-world shops. And eBay's right at the heart of that revolution, with more than £1,000 changing hands every second across eBay's global marketplaces. The advantages are pretty obvious.

For buyers, eBay offers a chance to snap up great deals, buying the things you want at less than high street prices - plus you'll find many things on eBay you just wouldn't be able to get anywhere else.

And for sellers, it's a way of getting your goods out there, in front of the noses of hundreds of millions of customers all over the world, without ever having to leave the comfort of your own home. Well, except to go to the post office.

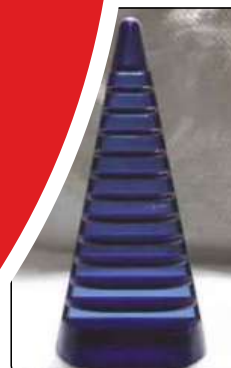
But for the first time eBay, the site can seem a bit intimidating. You need to know how to set up a profile, how to bid, and how to make sure you're not walking into a con. As a seller, you need to know how to value your items, and how to make sure your stuff appeals to as many potential buyers as possible.

That's what we're here to help with. Through this guide, we'll look at how to be a successful buyer and seller on eBay. We won't sugar coat it - we'll point out the cons as well as the pros, and help you avoid common pitfalls.

Ready? Let's get cracking...



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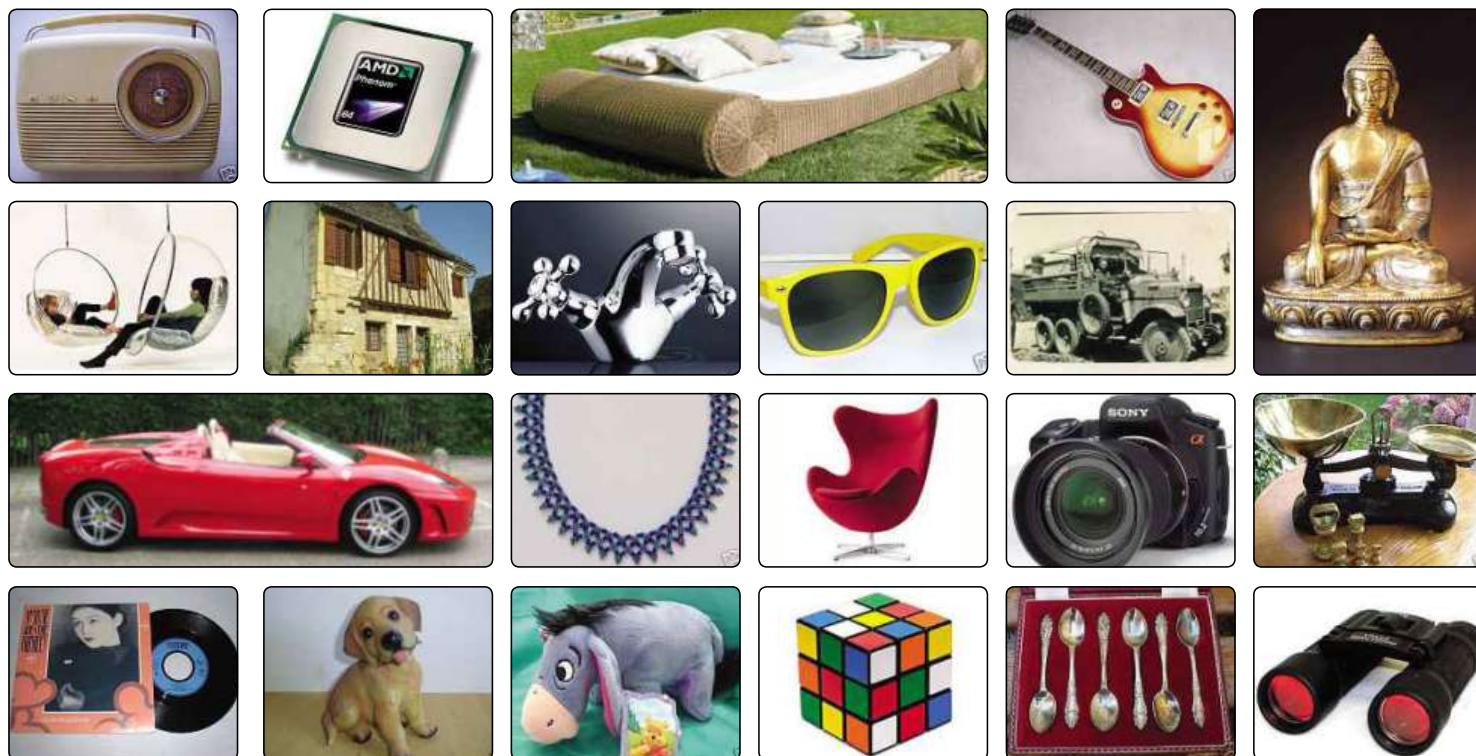
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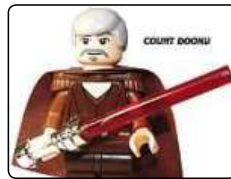


Chapter 1

Why Use eBay?

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Why Use eBay?

It's the world's most successful auction website by far. So what makes it so special and how does it differ from its competitors?

It's hard to imagine a world without eBay now. Without eBay, where would we go when we wanted to buy a retro My Little Pony in a fit of nostalgia? What would we do with all the unwanted Christmas presents we've been hoarding in our spare rooms, if we couldn't just list them on eBay and send them off to more appreciative homes? eBay is a convenient, quick and easy to use way to buy or sell almost anything you can think of, no matter how obscure. Of course, it's more than that too.

IT'S A BRILLIANT IDEA

Part of what makes eBay so brilliant is how simple it is. It's not particularly original: people have always sold or traded their unwanted goods with one another, but until a few years ago, it wasn't easy. You either had to get up at the crack of dawn to go to a car boot sale, or you had to post a handwritten card on supermarket notice boards telling other people what you wanted to buy or sell. Now, all you have to do is sign up for an eBay account, and suddenly a whole world of buyers and sellers is available to you. An online, worldwide marketplace is the kind of idea that's so clever it almost seems obvious.

What makes it even better is that it's very inclusive. eBay really is open to everyone. You don't need anything other than a computer to access eBay, and you don't need to have any specialist skills to use the website. With a little practise – and a little help from

this book, of course! – you'll be able to use eBay to get exactly what you want, whether that's a rare item or a bit of extra income.

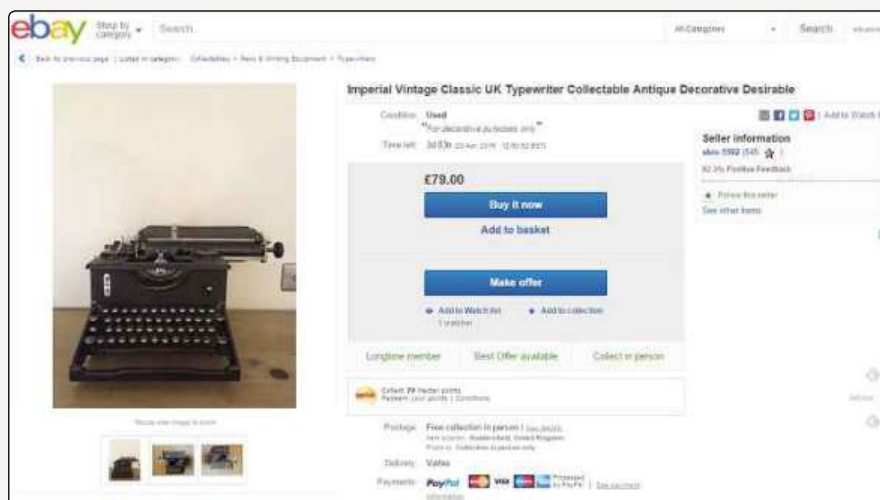
IT'S THE BIGGEST SHOP IN THE WORLD

If you're the kind of person who enjoys window shopping, you're going to love eBay. It's like the world's biggest shop. Log on and you'll find all kinds of things for sale, sorted by category and laid out in an easy-to-browse grid. Even if you don't know exactly what you're looking for, chances are you'll find something that appeals to you in one of eBay's hundreds of stores. Although you'll need to wait for anything you buy to arrive in the post, buying from eBay is more convenient than going to the shops because you'll never have to worry that they're out of stock, wait in a queue or rush to get everything you need before the store closes.

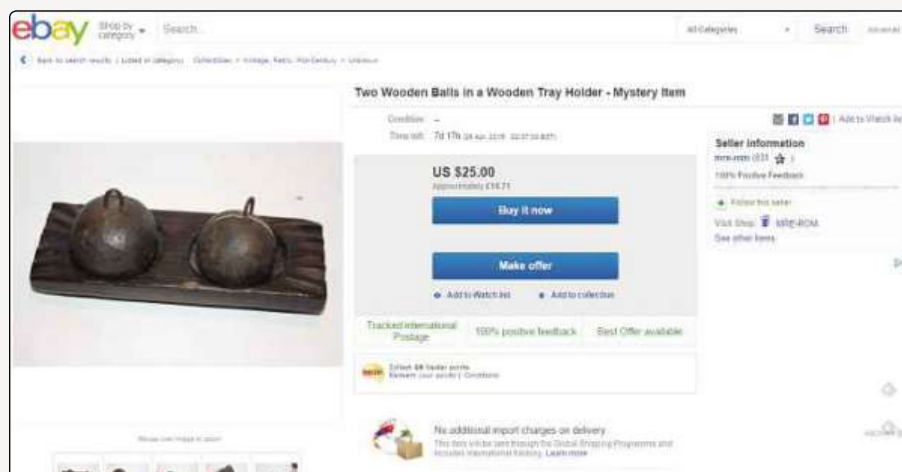
And if you're the kind of person who hates window shopping, who always knows exactly what they want and hates having to scour shops for it, you'll also find lots to love about eBay. All you need to do is type in what you're looking for, and you'll find all the sellers who are offering that item. You'll be able to see at a glance which sellers are offering the best prices, and a couple of clicks will tell you which sellers are the most reliable, with the quickest shipping. There are so many people and companies using eBay to sell their wares that you'll

DID YOU KNOW?

It's been calculated that the average household has around £450-worth of unwanted items that are suitable for selling on eBay. Better check the attic then...



◀ All kinds of things you didn't know you wanted are for sale



◀ One of the more bizarre items you can bid on

almost always be able to find the thing you're after, in stock and ready to ship out immediately. How many shops could you say that about?

IT'S A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

Lots of people dream about opening their own shops, but quite frequently they never get started because it's too expensive and time-consuming to set up a new business.

With eBay, though, setting up a business is easy, because there aren't any start-up costs, and you can go at your own pace. If you're a crafter or antique hunter in your spare time and dream of making your fortune doing it, you don't need to quit your day job straight away. You can start by listing a couple of items on eBay in your spare time and seeing how well they sell.

It's simple to test the waters, to see what kinds of things people want to buy. Market research is pretty easy too, as you can just use eBay's search facility to see how your stuff compares to other sellers. You might find that using eBay's bidding functions attracts more buyers and makes you more money than you'd expected; or you might find that setting a well-chosen Buy It Now price gets you the sales you need. We'll explain more about how it works later on, but there's definitely money to be made by using eBay, if you're determined.

IT'S ONE BIG COMMUNITY

Using eBay means dealing with people, not big corporations. You might find that you're buying something directly from an artist or craftsperson. Or you might be buying from someone just like you, someone who just wanted to clear some stuff out of their house. Or you might be buying from a small business. Larger businesses do use eBay to sell their stock now too, but you can also support smaller businesses through the eBay website.



▲ eBay's social side has even led to marriage

Don't worry, though. You might be buying from some random person you've never met, but the way eBay is set up means you can check whether your seller is trustworthy before handing over your cash. When you click through to an item, you'll be able to see the feedback the seller's other customers have left, which should give you a pretty good idea about whether or not you want to deal with them.

If you are a seller, you'll soon find that keeping your customers happy is a good way to attract more buyers. As you sell more items and gather more feedback, you'll be able to build a reputation for yourself that other eBay shoppers will know they can rely on.

LET'S GET STARTED

Convinced that eBay is special yet? Then let's get started. The site might seem overwhelmingly huge at first, but we'll show you exactly what you need to do and how you can get the best out of it. In this book, you'll find expert advice, step-by-step guides, and plenty of case studies showing you exactly how to (and how not to) use eBay.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

ONE DIRECTION'S TOAST

When One Direction were promoting their first album in Australia, a TV show thought it'd be funny to ask them to try Vegemite on toast live on air. Singer Niall Horan took one big bite... and left it at that. But his unfinished snack didn't end up in the bin. It ended up on eBay, where it soon sparked a bidding frenzy. Starting at \$0.99, the bite-marked bread eventually sold for \$99,999. Proceeds were given to Aussie charity YoungCare.

What Can It Do For You?

Whether you're just doing a spot of shopping or looking to set up your own business, eBay has something for everyone

eBay is a brilliant tool, and like most tools, it can be used in a variety of different ways, depending on what you need it for. You might never use all of eBay's features and functions; you might start off using it in one way and later find that you're using it for something else entirely. No matter who you are, though, chances are that eBay will be useful to you in one way or another. Let's take a look at some of the things eBay can do for you.

MAKE YOU A BIT OF SPARE CASH

Most people could do with making a bit of extra money at the moment. And most people also probably have stuff stashed in the attic, the spare room or under the bed that they don't need any more. eBay can help you turn it into cash, because even if you don't need that ice cream maker or unflattering shirt any more, someone else would probably love it. By listing something for sale on eBay, you're offering it to a massive worldwide community of potential buyers who are already out there, already looking for items just like yours.

Because eBay already has a tried and trusted system in place for buying and selling, both you and your potential buyer can be assured that you won't get ripped off. After years of providing a platform for anyone to buy or sell anything, eBay has a good reputation, and it'll guide you through your sale every step of the way – without any annoying haggling to battle through.

► eBay provides a way for sellers to keep overheads low, so even low-cost items can be profitably sold

HELP YOU LAUNCH A NEW BUSINESS

If you'd like to sell more than just odds and ends that you already own, you could always launch your own business on eBay. There are already thousands of people who do exactly that: some of them are people who make and sell their own crafts, some of them are people who buy things like beauty supplies in bulk and then resell them for a profit online, and still others might be dedicated bargain hunters who know what everything's worth and who to sell things to in order to maximise profits.

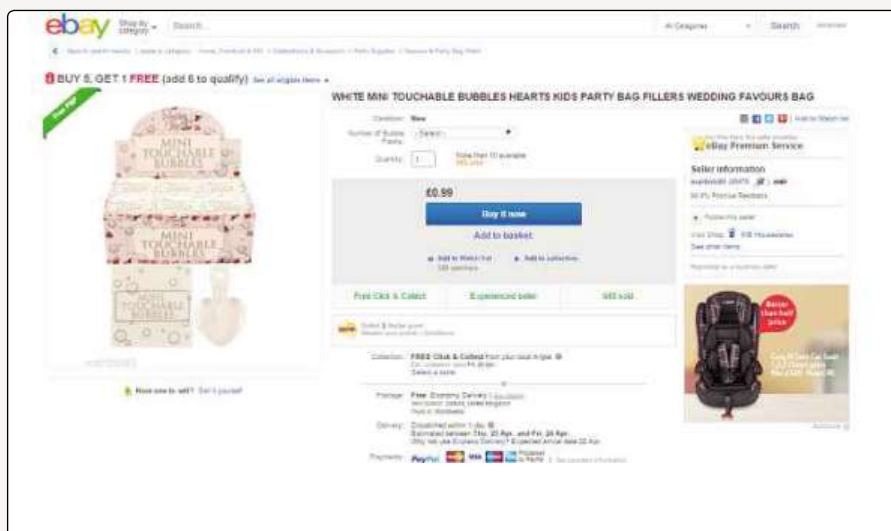
If a career in trawling antique shops and car boot sales for unrecognised treasures appeals to you, you could potentially use eBay to make a tidy income. Or if you're into making clothes or jewellery, it might turn out to be exactly the distribution model you need. Setting up a shop is hard work, but eBay simplifies the process by letting you sell within its existing structure. It's like setting up a stall in the middle of the internet's busiest high street.

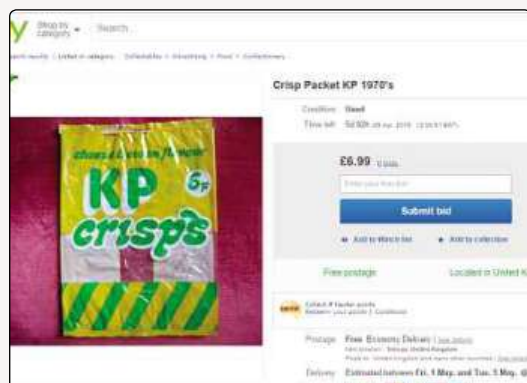
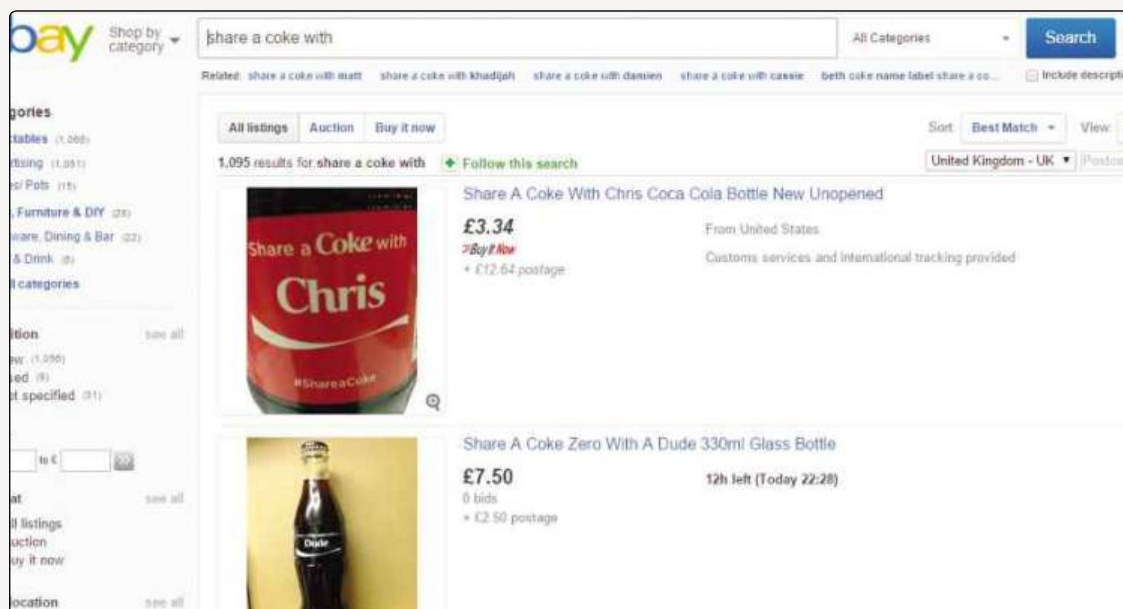
MOVE AN EXISTING BUSINESS ONLINE

If you're already running a business, you'll know that it's increasingly important to have a website. It's hard to get noticed without one. However, creating an online shop can be daunting, because it's quite complicated to set up an online shopping cart system – especially when it comes to finding ways to collect payments that's both

DID YOU KNOW?

At any given time, there are over 700 million items listed on the eBay marketplace – and users carry out over 250 million searches every day!





trustworthy enough to encourage customers and cheap enough not to eat into your profit margins. eBay could be exactly the solution you need.

Setting up a shop on eBay is relatively uncomplicated, and it has its own payment system that's well established and widely liked, so all you need to concentrate on is making your wares look as good as possible. There's a lot of competition on eBay, sure, but there are also hundreds of thousands of potential customers using the service.

eBay does take a cut of any profits you make, but it's likely to be less than you'd pay elsewhere, and it's also not very much at all when you consider the saving you're making in not needing to set up and administer your own bespoke system. Professional web design doesn't come cheap, after all.

FIND YOU A BARGAIN

Even if you never ever intend to sell anything to anyone, eBay can still be invaluable to you as a source of

▲ Even things normally reserved for the bin can end up on eBay

cut-price bargains. Because it's such a huge marketplace, it can be very competitive, which means you should be able to get what you want at a price that's right for you. It's very easy to search or browse, and since many sellers will send items worldwide, you can widen your net far wider than you would otherwise ever be able to do.

eBay becomes even more impressive if you're looking for something obscure. If you're after a vintage record, a book that's out of print or even the current must-have high-street fashion that sold out the minute the shops opened, you'll probably be able to find it on eBay. You might have to pay a bit more for the privilege of getting something really special, but if it's either that or not getting your lusted-after item, well, we know what we'd choose.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO TODAY?

There's one more secret that eBayers might tell you, if pushed: eBay can be a lot of fun to use. Because items can be put up for auction, there's a bit of a thrill attached to both buying and selling on there: you could end up making a lot more money than you expected if something you're selling attracts several determined bidders, and you could end up walking away with a bargain because you entered exactly the right bid at exactly the right moment to snatch an auction away from someone else. Plenty of things are available to buy straight away, so you don't need to get involved with bidding wars if you don't want to, but eBay is definitely more fun if you do.

What do you want eBay to do for you today?

WEBSITE REVIEW

EBAY ON TWITTER

www.twitter.com/ebay

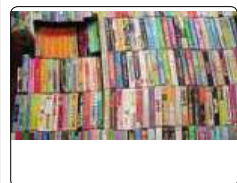


★★★★☆

Like every other major brand, eBay has a Twitter page – and if you're interested in getting real-time notifications about sales, charity events and other deals, it's worth following. Not every tweet is useful or even interesting; there's a lot of seasonal bumf that's just about reminding you that the site exists, but there's plenty of interesting and worthwhile stuff in there too. More than 344,000 people follow the account at the moment. Why not join them?

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

MILLION DOLLAR'S WORTH OF GAMES



One dedicated gamer picked up every single game released for every Sega system, every Nintendo system up until the GameCube, and every NEC system in a single auction when an eBay user put up this massive listing. The price? €999,999.99 or about \$1.2 million. That's a lot of games.

The Pros & Cons Of eBay

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to using eBay. Here, we take a look at what they are

eBay is well established as the biggest and best auction site on the web now, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's perfect. There are a lot of things that are brilliant about it and some things that aren't quite so good. If you ask your friends or just Google around, you'll find just as many people who will tell you it's the best thing since sliced bread as will tell you not to ever, ever use it.

The point of this book is to help you have the best possible experience on eBay. If you're paying attention to what you're doing, then with a bit of luck, you won't have any problems. Still, it's worth looking at the pros and cons of using eBay before you dive in...

PROS

It's the biggest auction site there is

eBay is gigantic. It's hard to really comprehend just how big it actually is; it has literally millions of active users, buying and selling things every single day. Just as there are advantages in going to a bigger shop over a smaller one, there are advantages to using eBay over smaller sites.

If you're selling, those millions of users mean your customer base is potentially enormous, which means you're likely to find a customer and potentially sell your item for more money than you would elsewhere.

If you're a buyer, that huge marketplace means not only that you're likely to find the thing you're looking for, but that you'll have a choice of sellers, so you can pick the one you're happiest with, whether that's the one

offering the thing you want at the most competitive price, the one offering free shipping or the one with the highest feedback score.

It's straightforward to use

Once you've used eBay for a little while, you'll be able to appreciate how well designed it is. Everything has been made as simple and streamlined as possible. There's no barrier to entry: you don't have to be a technological wizard to set up a shop or do your Christmas shopping. It's as easy to buy something from eBay as it is any other online store, and you'll find you'll get the hang of selling quickly too.

There's nothing fiddly here, nothing to get confused over; it all just works. Why waste time getting frustrated over another site when you could just go with the one that's had the most time and effort spent on making it easy to use?

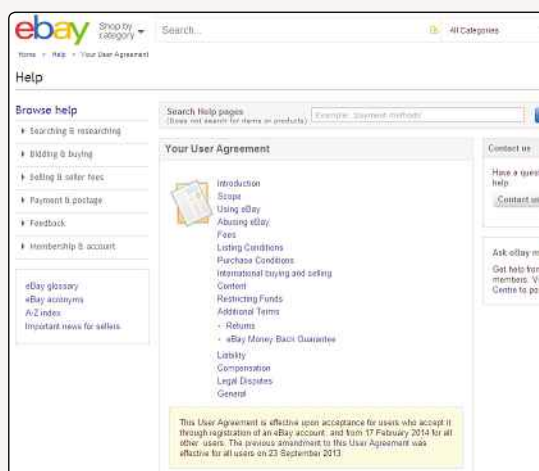
Everyone's kept accountable

You're dealing with complete strangers on eBay, which might seem intimidating at first. However, eBay's long established feedback system means you can see exactly who the trustworthy sellers are.

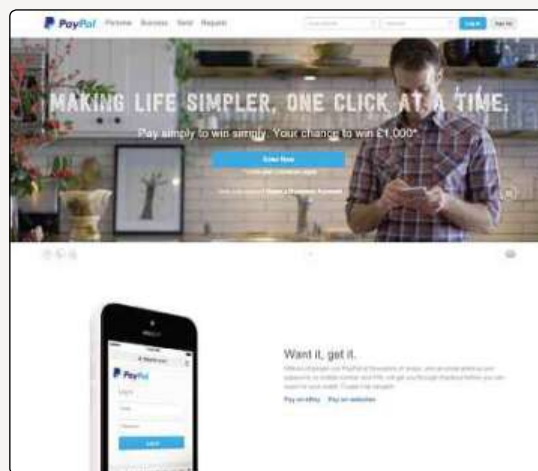
You'll see the effects of the feedback system right from the moment you first search for something to buy. In the list of search results, you'll see some auctions are marked 'Top rated seller', which should give you confidence about those sellers straight away. When you click through to the listing page, you'll see more

DID YOU KNOW?

Some UK sellers restrict their sales to UK buyers. This avoids problems regarding postal fees, and confused purchasers who opt for the cheapest, surface mail postal option and then expect it to be delivered in a few days.



▲ If you want to use eBay, you'll have to play by the rules



▲ Using PayPal is non-negotiable

information, like how many things that seller has sold through eBay and what percentage of those sales got positive feedback. Click through again and you can see the details of every transaction, so if you're not sure about someone, you can see what other people have said about them.

It's a really good way of making sure that untrustworthy types get shown up. If lots of other people say a seller doesn't send items quickly, doesn't package them well or doesn't really sell what they claim to, you'll know to give them a wide berth.

You really can find anything

This is an extension of the fact that eBay is the biggest online marketplace, really, but as a result of that size and the number and variety of different people selling on eBay, you can find almost anything you could ever want to buy. Want some clippings from a Victorian newspaper? Done. How about some imported sweets you can't get in Tesco? Yep, those too. It's hard to overestimate just how brilliant it is to be able to find anything you want, all in one place. Why waste time looking all over the place when you can just search eBay and find everything you want, all at once?

CONS

Some people can take advantage

Most people who use eBay are just like you and aren't looking to rip anyone off. However, it's worth bearing in mind that, no matter where you are, there will always be unsavoury types around. eBay is no different in that respect, unfortunately. There are lots of scammers on the internet looking to rip off naive buyers or steal from honest sellers, and that'll always be the case, no matter how many measures are brought in to stop them.

It's worth being a little bit cautious about who you deal with and keeping track of your transactions so you know what's going on - but you'd do that anyway, wouldn't you?

It charges fees

Although it's easy and convenient to use eBay, it does come at a cost: eBay takes a cut of all sales on its site, and how much those add up to depends on how you set up your listings. The fees eBay charges have changed over the last couple of years, and some people have taken umbrage to being charged more for the privilege of using the service. Disgruntled sellers who think eBay takes too much of their money are usually the people shouting the loudest about how you shouldn't use it. And while you can probably see their point, eBay is a business and needs to make its money somehow.

You need to use PayPal

After some more recent changes, all sellers on eBay are obliged to accept PayPal, and very few alternate



▲ For all its advantages, it pays to exercise caution on eBay

payment options are offered on the site. That's because PayPal is owned by eBay, so it obviously has a vested interest in making people use it. For most people, that's not a huge problem, because PayPal is easy and convenient to use, but it is a limitation some people aren't willing to accept.

PayPal, of course, comes with its own set of pros and cons, but if you want to use eBay, using it is non-negotiable.

You're on its turf

By choosing to use eBay rather than other sites or making your own web store, you have to accept its terms and conditions. You also have to accept that eBay is entitled to change the rules, including changing how much it charges, whenever it wants to. eBay is a commercial entity, and when you're using its service, you're on its turf and have to play by its rules. Again, that's not usually a problem, but it's worth bearing in mind.

The choice is yours

Ultimately, no one can make the decision about whether you want to use eBay (and in what capacity) other than you. We reckon the pros far outweigh the cons, but it's worth just being aware of the downsides, just so that you don't get caught out. Plus, the more prepared you are, the better you'll be able to navigate the site. It's always good to find out what you're letting yourself in for.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

OFFICIAL OLYMPIC TORCHES

Anyone who carried one of the torches in the London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay was entitled to buy their torch for £215. It was a great souvenir, but inevitably some people decided to sell their torches on eBay. One went for a massive £153,100! That's a hell of a profit margin...

eBay For Charity

Although it's a profit-making corporation, eBay also helps raise some money for good causes. Here's how...

Like many big businesses, eBay has a conscience. Rather than just generating loads of profit for itself, it also helps charities raise money too. Since eBay for Charity was launched in 2006, it's raised over £65 million for more than 7,500 different charities.

There are several ways eBay helps charity, some more visible on the site than others. Let's take a closer look at how eBay has helped charities all over the world carry out their good work...

SPECIAL AUCTIONS

Charities can sign up for their own accounts to sell stuff on eBay. That might mean selling ordinary items to raise money or it might mean organising big, one-off auctions of special items. Charities have been known to sell items donated by celebrities. For example, several limited edition bags designed by Lulu Guinness were auctioned off in aid of children's charity The Art Room. Sometimes they go even further, offering special one-of-a-kind experiences, like when Fergie from the Black Eyed Peas offered fans a chance to visit her vineyard and take part in a wine-tasting to raise money for The Foundation for AIDS Research.

Whatever they're selling, in order to use eBay for fundraising, charities need to sign up to eBay's partner charity, the PayPal Giving Fund (formerly known as



MissionFish). As part of that sign-up process, charities need to submit a copy of their logo, a short mission statement, a bank paying-in slip or cheque to authenticate the charity's bank account, and an authorisation letter including information of their charitable status. All that stuff lets PayPal make sure that the person trying to sign up really is associated with the charity they're claiming to represent – and that the charity really exists!

Once registered with PayPal, charities need to set up an eBay seller account and link the two together. Then anything they sell through the site, big or small, will benefit their charity; funds will be paid straight into their account. eBay also offers fee credits, allowing charities to save money on fees that a non-charity seller would have to pay.

NOTABLE CHARITY AUCTIONS

If you need some inspiration thinking up a charity auction, check out some of these real auctions:

A DATE TO A WEDDING

Aimee Robinson didn't have a date for her brother's wedding, so she turned to eBay. She created a listing offering "Young single girl seeks date for wedding", and raised over £300 for Diabetes UK.

A BRUSSEL SPROUT

Sprout-hating Andrew Henderson decided to auction off his Christmas dinner leftover to raise money for Tearfund. He raised £99.50 in the end.

A PATCHWORK QUILT

A kingsized handmade patchwork quilt created by Lyn Watson, an employee of WinterComfort

For The Homeless, raised £120 for that charity when it was auctioned off.

AN AUTOGRAPHED DERREN BROWN BILLBOARD

An enormous billboard of Derren Brown's face, signed by the illusionist himself was sold off on eBay for £3,000 (plus £15 postage) in aid of The Cystic Fibrosis Trust.

LUNCH WITH WARREN BUFFETT

The most expensive item ever auctioned off for charity was a steak lunch with billionaire investor Warren Buffett. The winning bidder paid \$2.64 million to win it – which only seems slightly more reasonable when you consider he was allowed to bring seven friends along with him as well.

DID YOU KNOW?

As eBay rarely intervenes in disputes between traders, an alternative is the small claims court. It can deal with claims of up to £5,000 in England and Wales or up to £3,000 in Scotland, and you can take the case there yourself without a solicitor. As journalist and eBay user Stuart Campbell said, "People don't know how simple and inexpensive the small claims court is."



▲ The eBay For Charity page lets you search for charity items

Signing up for an eBay charity account also means the charity gets a dedicated page on eBay. That page will display the logo, mission statement and a list of all auctions that currently support that charity, which makes it easier for supporters to find ways to donate. Charities also get access to reports and tools that help them raise even more money. For smaller charities, that kind of support could be invaluable, especially since it's so much easier and cheaper to sign up for a charity eBay account than to try to create an online shop of their own. And since eBay has so much traffic, it's also potentially a really good way to get noticed.

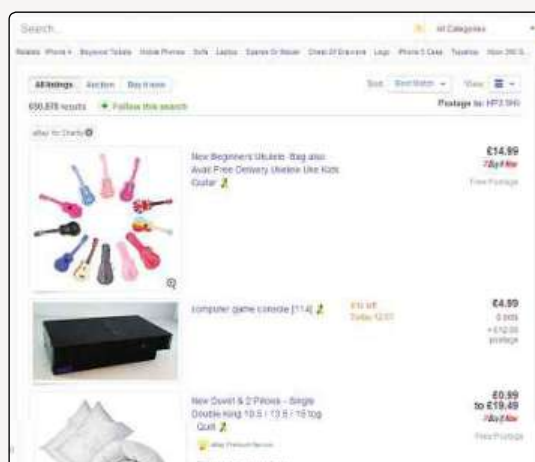
SELLING FOR CHARITY

Just because you're not an official representative of a charity doesn't mean you can't use eBay to support it, though. Once a charity has signed up to be part of eBay's directory of charities, anyone can decide to donate the proceeds of their auctions to that charity. So if you feel strongly about a cause and fancy doing a bit of easy fundraising, you can decide to auction off some of the junk from your spare room and give the cash straight to a good cause.

It's pretty easy to organise too. When you're creating a listing (if you've never done that before, don't worry: we'll explain all about it later!), you choose 'Advanced Sell', and then tick the charity box. You can pick your cause and then choose how much of the final price you want to donate – anywhere from 10% to 100%. You get a fee credit on anything you donate to charity, depending on how much you donate; if you donate 20%, eBay will waive 20% of the fees. Once your item sells, the percentage you chose will automatically be credited to your charity's account.

If you also tick the Gift Aid box, the government will add an extra 25p to every £1 you raise (assuming you're a UK taxpayer).

Charity listings are shown as such on the site too: a blurb about your charity will appear on the listing page,



▲ Charity listings are marked with the blue and yellow ribbon logo

and a blue and yellow ribbon will be displayed next to the listing's title, to let everyone know that your auction benefits a good cause. It's all pretty straightforward – and definitely easier than running a marathon to raise a bit of cash for your chosen charity!

DONATE WHILE YOU SHOP

It's not just sellers who can choose to give money to charity either. Whenever you buy anything through the eBay site, you'll be offered the opportunity to add on a donation to your payment to benefit a randomly selected charity. Any charity that's signed up for eBay's directory could pop up, and usually you're only asked to give £1. Many of us probably mean to give money to charity but don't always remember to or find it too much of a hassle to go through the process of setting up a direct debit. By letting buyers donate just a little bit of money at a time when they already have their metaphorical wallets open, eBay makes the process painless for everyone involved – and giving money to charity always makes you feel good, doesn't it?



▲ Formerly MissionFish, the PayPal Giving Fund is eBay's official charity partner

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

TREASURE TROVE

The British Museum is keen to point out that treasure hunters who find valuables such as gold and silver coins or Roman jewellery and sell them on eBay are breaking the law. Items found in this way should be reported to the authorities as treasure trove, and the museum has set up the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) to police eBay for such items.

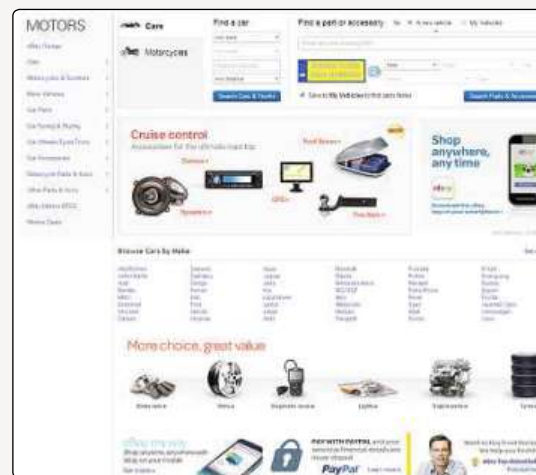
The Evolution Of eBay

How did a computer programmer's home page grow into the world's biggest online auction site and arguably the dot-com boom's greatest success story? Let's take a look...

Like many web users in the mid-90s, Baltimore-based Franco-Iranian computer programmer Pierre Omidyar had a home page. And like many home pages, it was pretty trivial. It even included a tongue-in-cheek 'tribute' section dedicated to the Ebola virus. But it was soon to grow into something massive. The 28-year-old coder became interested in the technical issues involved in setting up an online auction site, where sellers and buyers could interact independently of the facilitator. He added a test-of-concept feature, which he called AuctionWeb, to his website and went live with it on America's Labor Day weekend in 1995.

The very first item sold on AuctionWeb was a broken laser pointer, listed for sale by Omidyar himself. His expectations for the auction were low, believing it would only make a few cents, if it sold at all. This first, trivial listing was intended to test how his new subsite performed with a live auction rather than to sell the product. But to his astonishment, it went for \$14.83. "You do realise it's broken?" Omidyar emailed to the winning bidder. "I'm a collector of broken laser pointers" was the reply.

Omidyar had never intended AuctionWeb to take off to any great degree. He was more interested in the



▲ eBay Motors was launched in 1999

technical side of things than running it as a business. Yet, as the laser pointer auction proved, he was onto something big. Sellers began listing all manner of items on AuctionWeb, which soon took over his entire domain. When it became too big even for this, he moved the site to a new, more expensive business domain. He tried to register www.echobay.com, after his consultancy firm, Echo Bay Technologies, but the URL was already taken, so he chose a shortened version: ebay.com was born!

According to eBay, "From day one, Omidyar built eBay around what remain the company's core values" that people are basically good, that everyone has something to contribute and an open environment brings out the best in people. "The success of eBay underscores the truth of these values, and is at the heart of eBay's continuing success."

EARLY GROWTH

The budding auction site grew and grew. In early 1996, Omidyar started charging a fee based on the final sale price. He wasn't sure whether the users would accept this, but the money soon came rolling in. Monthly profits reached \$10,000 by June, having doubled for four consecutive months. It was time to quit his day job and devote his full-time attentions to eBay, which took on its first employee around now, a part-timer called Chris Agarpao. He was soon joined by the company's



▲ eBay's head office in San Jose, California

Popular eBay Items

eBay's listing of the most commonly searched for items on the site shows, at a glance, what people are looking for. At the time of writing, these included:

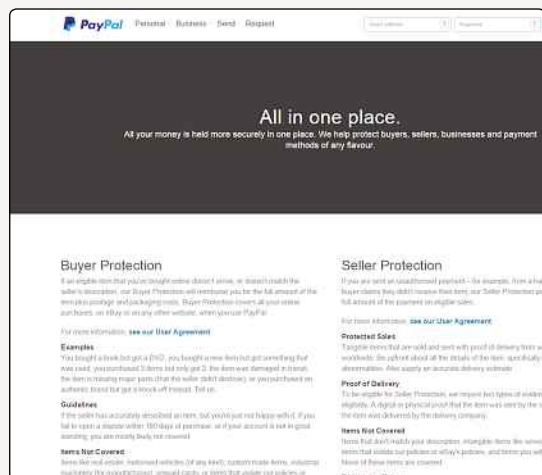
- Wedding shoes
- Dog kennels
- Elvis

- Wellies
- Garden fencing
- Cowboy boots
- Fish tank

So if you're looking to sell any of those, you might be in luck. The full list of popular searches can be found at pages.ebay.co.uk/top-searches.html.

first president, Canadian-born businessman Jeff Skoll. By the end of the year, eBay boasted 41,000 registered users, and a gross merchandise volume (the total value of all goods sold on the site) of \$7.2 million. eBay soon entered its first third-party licensing deal, licensing its SmartMarket Technology to a company called Electronic Travel Auction, which sold plane tickets and other such travel products.

By 1997, aided by an investment of \$5,000,000 from a venture capital firm, the company had grown to 41 employees. It's said that in the early days they sat on folding chairs, and used self-assembly desks they had to screw together themselves. Unlike other hungry dot-com start-ups, Omidyar was keeping costs as low as possible, even though business was growing at a phenomenal rate. eBay was hosting over 200,000 auctions a month, compared to 250,000 auctions for the whole of 1996. Collectors found the site especially useful, with the market for Beanie Babies alone surpassing \$500,000 a year. Registered users crossed the 341,000 mark, and gross sales exceeded \$95 million. Feedback stars made an appearance too, joining the feedback forum introduced the previous year. In September, the AuctionWeb name was dropped and the entire site was branded under the name 'eBay'.



▲ PayPal introduced Buyer Protection in 2003

In March 1998, Harvard Business School graduate Margaret Whitman joined eBay as CEO to further develop and expand the business, which she went on to do with a series of shrewdly planned buyouts. The personalisation tool My eBay was launched to make it easier for both buyers and sellers to manage their accounts, and the eBay Foundation was set up as a charitable institution. In September, just three years after selling that broken laser pointer on his home page, eBay went public. Omidyar and Skoll became instant billionaires. By now the company boasted 138 employees, 2.1 million registered users and had a gross merchandise volume of \$740 million.

INTERNATIONAL REACH

1999 saw some major changes to the online auction site. First of all, it went international, with local versions of eBay launching in several countries. Germany was first, with www.ebay.de launching in June. The UK and Australia got their own eBay sites in October. The march towards world domination had begun. eBay Motors was also launched that year. This specialist site, found at www.motors.ebay.com, offers an online marketplace for cars, vans, motorcycles, boats, collectables and other vehicles, as well as parts and accessories. The 'Buy It Now' option was introduced, enabling sellers to sell at a fixed price instead of going through the auction process, and a partnership with AOL was launched. eBay paid \$75 million to become AOL's official auction site for four years, giving it prominent placement on several sites owned by the ISP, including AOL.com, Compuserve, instant messaging service ICQ and the newly acquired Netcenter Web portal of Netscape Communications Corporation. By now the auction site, which was still only four years old, had 640 employees and ten million registered users.

eBay started the year 2000 as the net's number one e-commerce site, a position it cemented with a series of new international launches. In April, the auction site opened a Canadian branch, with France following in October and Austria in December. eBay Taiwan launched this year too. One wing of the company that wasn't doing so well, however, was Billpoint. An

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

ROMAN SIEGE ENGINE



Fans of ancient history could've treated themselves to a full-sized Roman siege engine in October 2008. The device, called a ballista, was built for a BBC documentary several years earlier. It was 7.5 meters tall, 8.5 meters long and weighed 12 tons. Designed for laying siege to fortresses, it could fire a boulder up to 400 yards. Bidding started at £25,000.

CHAPTER 1

GETTING READY



▲ eBay's front page in April 2000



▲ eBay China is now found at www.eachnet.com



▲ By 2006, the categories list began to show the range and diversity we know today



▲ eBay UK, as it is today. Easily navigable, with lots of categories to choose from

online payment system bought by eBay in May 1999, Billpoint was intended to take some of the risk out of paying for goods won on eBay. By February 2000, it was processing 4,000 payments a day, but start-up company PayPal was getting through 200,000 daily transactions. Ironically, most of these were generated by eBay sales. Yet this was a minor glitch in an otherwise unqualified success story. By the end of the year, the auction site had around 1,900 employees, which was triple its 1999 workforce, and 22 million registered users.

In another charitable move, eBay launched Auction for America on 17th September 2001, to raise money for the victims of the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center six days earlier. eBay Stores was also launched that year, as were new international marketplaces in Ireland, Italy, Korea, New Zealand, Singapore and Switzerland. eBay was going from strength to strength. In the past year, its registered users had almost doubled to 42 million, and its employees swelled to 2,500.

The phishing scam that hit the website in 2001 was much less welcome. A spam e-mail claiming to be from eBay encouraged users to follow a link and

to enter their registration details into what turned out to be a fake version of eBay's home page. eBay issued a warning.

PAYPAL

By the summer of 2002, eBay had already acquired and swallowed up eight companies, mostly rival online auction sites. But its most significant acquisition came in October of that year. PayPal, by now a near monopoly in the independent online payments market, was bought by eBay for \$1.5 billion. By the time of the buyout, PayPal was already the payment system of choice for around 50% of eBay users and, under the eBay umbrella, it continued to grow. Competing services such as Citibank's c2it and Yahoo!s PayDirect soon closed as PayPal became as dominant in the online payments market as eBay was in online auctions. In 2008 it processed transactions of \$60 billion in total, an increase of 27% over the previous year. Naturally, PayPal's position as the de rigueur payment method for eBay made life easier for eBayers. Sellers could get away with offering only one payment type without risking their auction prices, and buyers knew their PayPal accounts were valid anywhere on eBay.

DID YOU KNOW?

A couple won a wedding on eBay – for just £51. Colette Palin spotted a wedding reception was being auctioned off by Buckatree Hall, Shropshire, after a last-minute cancellation. "We heard the hotel were planning to auction a wedding day," she said, "We just thought we would see if we could strike lucky."

eBay Facts & Figures

Here are some things you may not know about eBay:

- eBay is the seventh most popular website in the US.
- eBay currently boasts 233 million users worldwide.
- More than \$1,900-worth of goods are traded on the site every second.
- eBay UK currently has over 15 million users, with more than 70 million items listed on the site at any one time.
- 45% of active UK Internet users visit eBay UK at least once a month.
- eBay has localised websites in 30 countries.
- Since 2006, more than £65,492,000 has been raised through charity auctions on eBay.
- eBay's year-end reports for 2013 showed over \$16 billion in revenue.
- eBay's stock prices also skyrocketed in 2012, rising by 80%.
- You can buy just about anything on eBay, as there are 13,000 categories to choose from, but a few items are prohibited. These include live animals, bootleg or pirated movies and music, body parts, tobacco, drugs and firearms.
- eBay has over 33,500 employees.



By 2003, eBay had topped 5,700 employees, up from 4,000 the previous year. There were around 95 million registered users and 40 million people with PayPal accounts. And still the company continued to grow, opening a Hong Kong site in December. PayPal introduced Buyer Protection in this year too. Now, if you bought an item on eBay and it didn't arrive or was significantly different to how it was described in the auction, you could appeal to PayPal and possibly get your money back (including the postage), subject to adjudication by PayPal. The maximum amount covered was boosted to \$1,000 the following year. eBay UK reached a major milestone in 2003 too. Come December, it crossed the 100 million listings barrier.

2004 was another year of expansion and acquisitions, as eBay opened local sites in Malaysia and the Philippines and bought out the Bazee marketplace in India, and Rent.com closer to home. eBay also opened its China Development Center in Shanghai to accelerate technology innovation. By now it employed 8,100 staff worldwide, and enjoyed 135 million registered users.

The following year, eBay made its biggest purchase to date, paying \$2.6 billion in cash and stock for Internet telephony leader Skype. Other acquisitions included Verisign Merchant Gateway and Shopping.com, and there were launches in Poland and Sweden. eBay was growing at such an incredible rate that in 2006, the company boasted 222 million users and 13,200 employees. The following year, the UK site reached another milestone, crossing the one billion listings mark. Also in 2006, eBay made available some of its programming interfaces, allowing third-party developers to build applications that work with eBay.

CHANGES

Two changes made in 2008 got a mixed reception from eBay users. At the beginning of the year, the feedback system was changed so sellers could no longer give negative feedback on buyers. The move was made due to complaints from buyers that they couldn't leave deservedly negative feedback without risking a retaliatory strike, but sellers complained they now had no recourse against a miscreant buyer. In December, the site abandoned its live auctions, which had been run in association with an auction house and allowed eBay users to bid through eBay, just as they would if they were at the venue.

According to Jim Ambach, vice president of Seller Experience, live auctions were no longer part of eBay's immediate focus and were therefore retired.

While users might gripe and groan about changes in the rules and alleged lack of support when there's a problem, almost everyone agrees the site has grown in user-friendliness over the years. As Pennsylvanian eBayer Colleen Allison put it, "I've sold more on eBay in the last four months than I did in the previous three years combined, and it has definitely become more user-friendly."

And the site is growing in popularity on this side of the pond too. eBay UK, which will celebrate its 15th anniversary in the autumn of 2014, today offers more than 17 million live listings at any one time. 45% of active UK internet users visit eBay.co.uk at least once a month, and it's been estimated that 178,000 users run a business as a primary or secondary source of income. And with 13,000 categories to choose from, there's an excellent chance you'll find what you're looking for.

It seems eBay has come on a long way since it sold that broken laser pointer all those years ago...

WEBSITE REVIEW

AUCTIONHUMOR

www.auctionhumor.com

★★★★★



Want to buy the conversation starter of a lifetime? AuctionHumor might be able to help.

This website is a chronicle of all the weird stuff people sell on eBay. When we last visited, there were posts about a shrunken possum head, Dick Clark's sports car, and the top secret recipe for Coca Cola, all for sale on eBay.

It's not updated particularly regularly (once or twice a month seems to be standard), but the things AuctionHumor finds can be pretty funny, and since it always includes a link back to the original auction, if something really tickles your fancy, you can click through and bid on it.

Most of the auctions are maybe a bit weird for most people's taste, and the site is pretty minimal, but it's a fun way to waste five minutes.



Chapter 2

What You Need To Get Started

Your eBay Toolkit	22
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CHAPTER 2

WHY USE EBAY?

Your eBay Toolkit

You've decided to give eBay a try but don't know where to begin? In this chapter, we show you what you need to get started

There are as many ways to access eBay as there are devices with internet access. We'll cover mobile apps in a few pages' time, but for now, we're going to assume you'll be using a desktop or laptop PC, with a broadband connection.

You can use whatever browser you'd usually use, and we probably don't need to tell you this, but if you're going to be going online to buy and sell things, it's worth making sure you've got up-to-date anti-virus software installed on your computer. eBay does its best to make sure that all your personal details are encrypted and transactions are carried out over secure connections, but it doesn't hurt to do your bit to protect yourself too.

You'll also need an email address to sign up for eBay. You can use an existing one for simplicity's sake, but if you're planning on making eBay your business or otherwise doing a lot of buying or selling, you might want to consider signing up for a new webmail account to keep everything tidy (and stop eBay-related emails swamping your personal mail!).

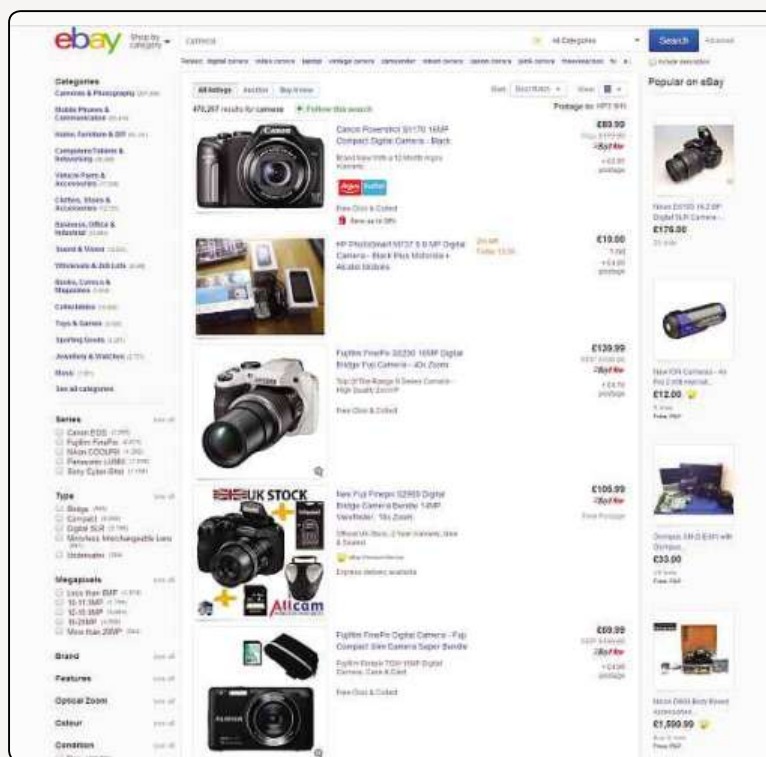
BRING AND BUY

In addition to a computer to sit behind, a potential eBay buyer also needs a roof over their head or at least a front door with a number or name on it. A postal address is required to receive the items you buy. To purchase said items, you'll also need a suitable form of payment, which is not as blindingly obvious as it may sound, because it depends entirely on the seller's preferences. Some sellers will happily accept traditional forms of payment such as cash (how quaint!), postal orders and cheques. However, the vast majority of sellers prefer to receive online payments, because they're processed much more quickly and securely.

What does this mean? Well, eBay policy now states that all sellers must offer PayPal as a payment method, so you can easily pay for any item online, although you will need a credit card or bank account to facilitate the payment. If you don't already have a PayPal account, you'll need to set one up. All you need to do is specify whether you want to draw the funds from a credit card or bank account. It's simple, and

DID YOU KNOW?

According to Prince Charles, his wife Camilla is a big fan of eBay. She uses the site to buy 'knick-knacks' and gifts for her children.



◀ Pictures are an important part of selling on eBay, so it's worth getting a decent camera



▲ Prepare to spend a lot of time in front of your computer if you want to be a serious eBay

because the transaction is completed immediately, you can be sure that your items are winging their way towards you much more quickly.

THE HARD SELL

If you intend to sell items on eBay, then you also need a PayPal account. Again, you'll need to link your online account to a credit card or bank account. As a seller, it's recommended that you verify your account. There's more information on PayPal later in the book, so don't worry if you're not familiar with it yet.

Another essential piece of equipment for every seller is a digital camera, so you can take photographs of your items and use them to illustrate your listings. After all, people like to see exactly what they're buying. When eBay was in its infancy and digital cameras were still very much a luxury item, very few sellers uploaded images, but these days you'd be committing commercial suicide if you didn't provide at least one image.

If you haven't got a digital camera, consider buying or borrowing one - or using the camera built into your mobile phone, if you've got one. Whatever kind of camera you're using, it's worth getting familiar with it and its settings; depending on what you're planning to sell, decent quality pictures could make all the difference to how much you get for your item - or whether it sells at all. We'll come back to the importance of photos in auctions a bit later on too.

CHECK IT OUT

You should now have everything you need to start wheeling and dealing on eBay. An internet-enabled computer? Check. A postal address? Check. A bank account and/or credit card? Check. A digital camera? Check.

There's just one thing missing: an eBay account. Registering for an account is free and easy. Just follow our step-by-step guide and you'll be a member of the world's largest marketplace in a matter of minutes.

What's In A Name?

When you register with eBay, you must enter a User ID. This is your unique username that's displayed (rather than your real name) when you buy and sell on eBay. If you use eBay casually, your choice of User ID isn't overly important. It just needs to be something that a) you're not going to forget, and b)

doesn't put people off. However, if you're planning on specialising in a particular area and bulk selling a certain type of product, you should choose a User ID that reflects your business. If you're not happy with your chosen ID, eBay lets you change it at any time (but not more than once a month).

WEBSITE REVIEW

GOOFBID

www.goofbid.com

★★★★★



Unlike many online eBay resources of its ilk, Goofbay is regularly updated, looks and feels fresh, and remains a dream to use. It offers lots of tools under one umbrella, from a misspelling search engine, through to local searches, and a more comprehensive feedback checker. Furthermore, there's a really useful bid history system (where you can download results as an Excel-compatible CSV file).

In fact, there are so many little tools and options hiding away within Goofbay, that it's almost churlish to isolate individual choices. Instead, do visit one of the best eBay-related websites on the internet.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

A FLYING CAR



According to inventor Paul Moller, "the M200X was the first VTOL aircraft of its kind (flying car) to fly successfully and did so repeatedly during the 1980s." He planned to put the vehicle into production, but sold the original prototype on eBay. Some experts doubted the veracity of Moller's claims for the device.

How To... Set Up Your eBay Account

Whether you're planning to do lots of selling or just a bit of bargain hunting, you'll need to register for an eBay account. Here's how it's done

1 Head to **www.ebay.co.uk** and in the top-left corner, you'll see a link to 'sign in or register'. Click on the link to register to get started.

There are two types of eBay account: personal and business. For starters, we'll assume you want a personal account; you can always convert it later.

2. Now you'll be asked for some details: your first name, surname, email address and password. Type these into the boxes as required. The form asks you to type your password twice, which is just to make sure you haven't made a typo and created a password you can't remember!

3. This page also asks you to accept the User Agreement. Click on the link to read it - it's all pretty standard stuff, but it's worth taking a moment or two just to make sure you know what you're signing up for.

4. eBay will now automatically generate a UserID for you based on your name. If you don't want to use it, click Continue, then go to My eBay. Click on Account, and under Personal information you can edit your username. This can be changed once every 30 days, if you change your mind again.

5. Next, you need to fill in the other details under My Account. Start with clicking on Addresses and fill in your postal address; eBay needs this so anything you buy can be sent to you. You'll need to re-enter your password to fill in this information, so you know it's secure.

6. Another thing you'll need to set up is your PayPal account. If you sell on eBay, you have to accept PayPal as a payment method, and eBay will also take fees from your account. If you don't have an account, you can sign up from the form linked under PayPal Account.

7. In My Account, you can also set up Communication Preferences, which will control how eBay lets you know about recent activity (e.g. someone bidding on your items, or an auction you're watching ending). You can change any of this at any time.

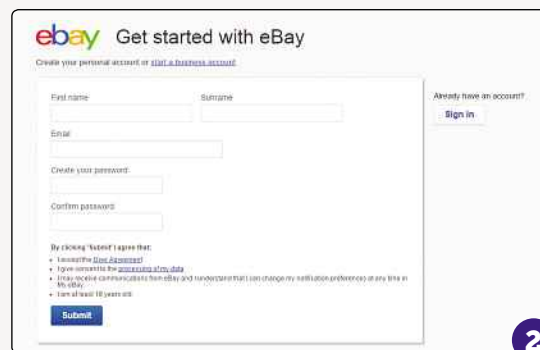
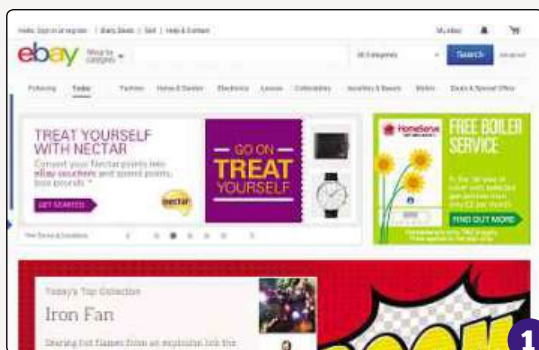
8. If any of your personal information changes in the future, like if you move house, you'll need to come back to this page to let eBay know. Just click My Account and change your details - after all, you wouldn't want your eBay buys going to the wrong address!

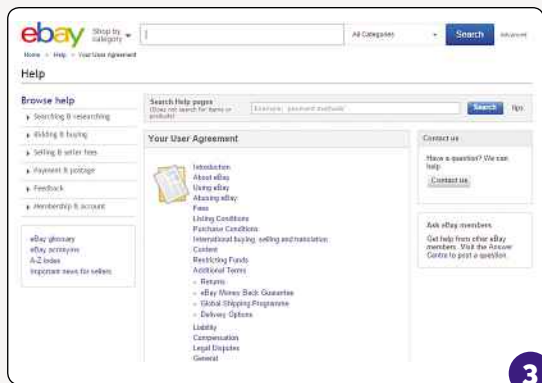
9. My Account is also where you'll see all your recent activity on eBay, like items you've bought, or feedback you've received. Once you're used to it, it's very easy to navigate, so take a bit of time to get familiar.

10. Before you move on, it's worth setting up a secret question in case you ever forget your password. Click 'Create' next to Secret Question under Personal Information, and make it something you'll definitely remember.

DID YOU KNOW?

eBay's first ever employee was Chris Agarpao, who was hired as an assistant when the workload piled up. Its second was Jeff Skoll, hired as president. Today, it boasts around 27,700 employees.

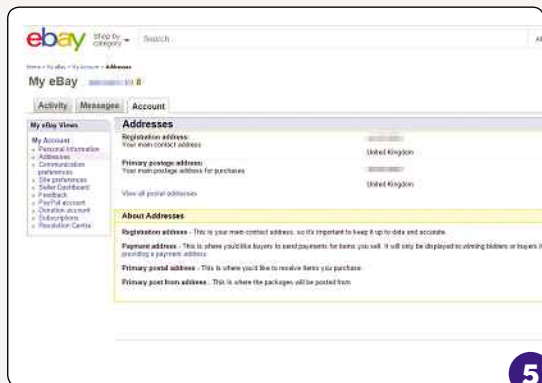




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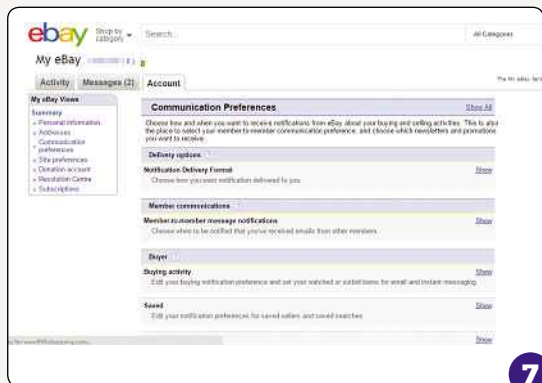
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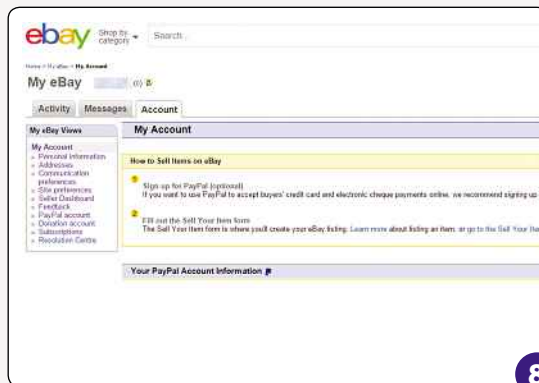
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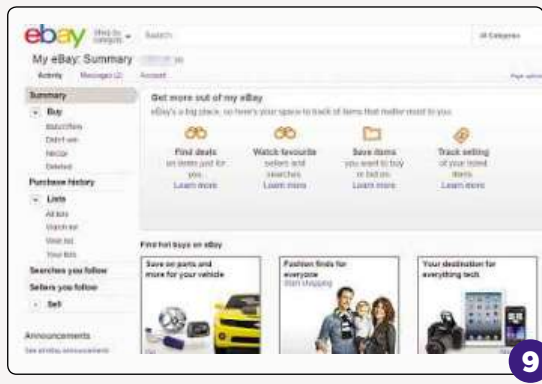
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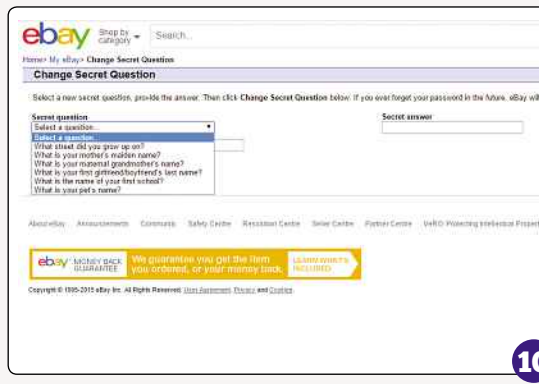
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10

WEBSITE REVIEW

EBAY BULLETIN

Ebaybulletin.co.uk

★★★★★



The eBay Bulletin has been going for many years. And for many years, it's been one of the very best online resources for UK eBayers. This year is no different at all.

There's a real sense of an expert at work, and that expert is Mark Pugh. He continues to publish a regular newsletter, packed with eBay help and advice, covering how best to work with the service, and broader issues relating to being a small trader on eBay. There's a helpful 'Ask Molly' section too, where readers can write in with queries. They tend to be interesting queries, and they get interesting answers too!

In short, the eBay Bulletin was and is a terrific resource.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

SELL YOUR LIFE



After the break-up of a relationship, Ian Usher wanted a clean start. So the British man living in Perth listed his entire life on eBay: his house, his car, his job and even his friends. He raised \$399,000 (Australian dollars), which is around £197,000 at today's exchange rates.

CHAPTER 2

WHY USE EBAY?

eBay On The Move

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to using eBay. Here, we take a look at what they are

Mobile devices are now being used more than desktop PCs to access the internet. In fact, according to the studies, one in five young people doesn't even have a desktop PC - because they don't need one as well as a mobile. Between smartphones, tablets, Kindles, GPS systems, games consoles and MP3 players, it's starting to seem like every piece of technology we touch has the ability to access the internet, so it's often more convenient to use whatever's in your pocket to go online than it is to wait till you get home and sit down at your computer.

eBay is well aware of that and launched its first mobile app in 2007. Since then, that app has been improved and updated, made available for several different platforms and followed by more apps, all with different purposes. Want to use eBay on the go? No problem. By the end of 2012, the official eBay app had been downloaded by more than 100 million people, and 100 million listings had been posted to the site via the mobile app. Around the world, \$275 is spent on eBay via a mobile device every single second; in the UK alone, an item is sold every second. Mobile is big business, so if you're an eBay user with a smartphone and you're not using the app yet, you might be missing out!

WHERE ARE YOU?

Before we go into any more detail, it's worth pointing out that depending on where in the world you are, you might have access to different eBay apps. The US gets the best deal here: eBay users living in

America can choose from eight different apps (though not all of them are available on every platform, even then).

Those apps include item-specific apps eBay Fashion and eBay Motors; eBay Now, which organises deliveries from local stores; eBay Exact, for ordering 3D printed items; StubHub, for selling tickets; Half.com, for selling media; and RedLaser, a barcode scanning bargain finder. There's a lot of sophisticated technology in those apps, and eBay is constantly innovating, creating new apps in response to consumer demand.

Unfortunately, though, in the UK, only a couple of those apps are currently available at the moment. Luckily, the most important one - the main eBay app - is available, as is the PayPal app, so you can still do all your usual buying and selling on your phone or tablet.

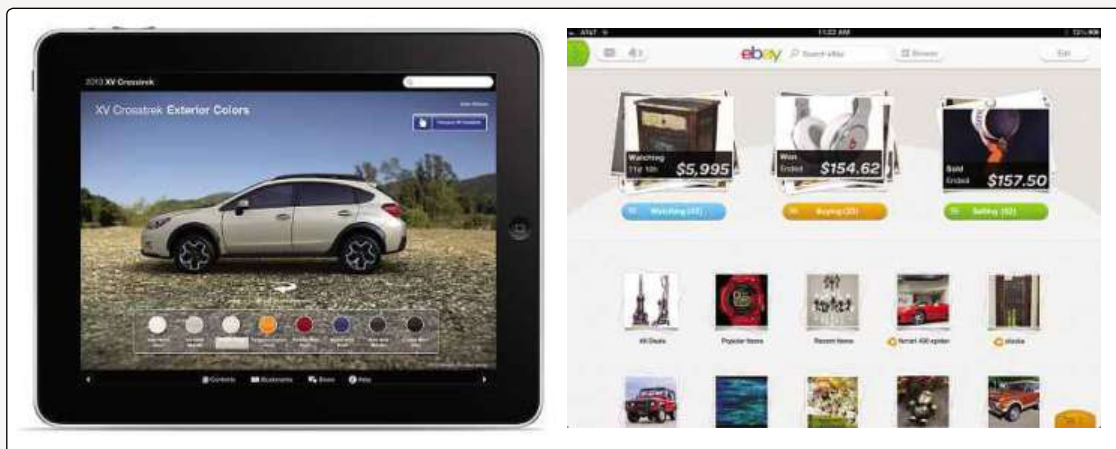
WHAT DEVICE ARE YOU USING?

eBay has made an effort to make sure that its app is available on almost every platform someone might want to use it on. In 2007, when the app was first launched, it was only available for the iPhone, but since then the tablet and smartphone market has exploded, so eBay has created versions of its app for Android, BlackBerry, Windows Phone and even one optimised specifically for the iPad.

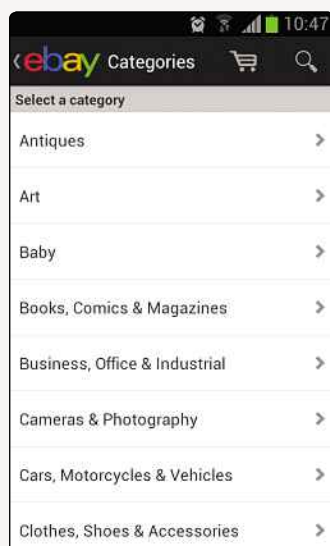
Not all apps are created equal, though. As you might expect, iOS and Android users get access to more features than BlackBerry and Windows

DID YOU KNOW?

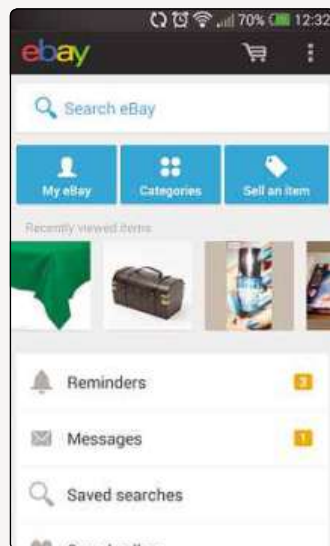
A Shropshire businessman who had been burgled spotted some of his possessions on eBay. As a result, police raided three addresses in Shrewsbury, recovering goods worth up to £7,500.



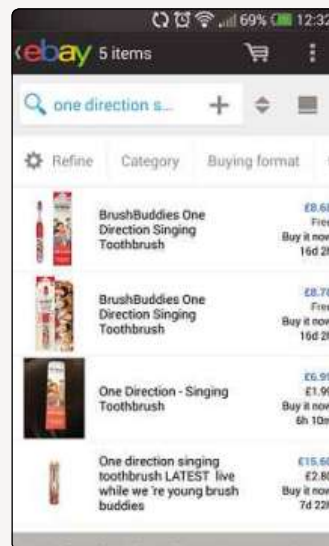
▲ eBay's mobile apps differ from platform to platform



▲ You can browse categories on your phone just like on the site



▲ Sign in with your account, and all your info will be synced



▲ Whichever version of the app you use, you can search and shop as usual

Phone users. Let's start with the positives: whichever device you're using, you can use eBay's powerful search function to trawl through listings, and you can use PayPal to pay for anything you want to buy. Buyer alert notifications are also available for all the apps, so if there's an auction you have your eye on but you can't be at your computer when it gets close to the end, you can use your smartphone to make sure you don't miss out. All versions of the app also allow users to leave feedback on completed transactions.

If you're a seller, you'll be glad to know that all versions of the app also let you create listings, add photos, schedule your auctions and preview and revise your listings. All versions also let you use the relist function.

That's the basics covered, then. However, more advanced features aren't available to everyone. Windows Phone and BlackBerry users can't use the Best Offer function, for example. BlackBerry users will also find themselves unable to choose from different delivery methods, change their delivery address or view a tracking number for anything they've bought. Oddly, BlackBerry and Windows Phone users also can't register for a new eBay account through the app, though users of all other devices can.

And only Android users can use eBay's voice search function, though most smartphones are capable of understanding voice commands.

If you're disappointed by what you can do with eBay on your phone, don't take it too hard. eBay says it's working on developing its apps, so any features you currently can't access might well be added later. With any luck, that development work will also mean that

non-US residents will get access to more eBay apps in future too.

THEY'RE FREE

Fancy giving eBay's app a go? The best thing about it is that it's free, no matter which platform you're using it on. You can download it from the app store that relates to your device by opening the store on either your mobile or computer, searching for 'eBay', and then following the instructions to download and install it.

It shouldn't take more than a few minutes, and then you just sign in with your eBay account to get access to eBay's massive marketplace. Because you'll be using the same account on both your computer and your mobile device, you'll find that you can pick up exactly where you left off: any items you'd recently looked at are easily accessible from the home screen, all your Saved Searches are just a couple of taps away, and you can also see any messages you've sent or received.

The notification settings are particularly useful, as you can set it so your device beeps or flashes whenever an auction you're watching is coming to an end or when you've been outbid. On the desktop version of the site, you'd have to check or at least check your email, so the mobile app is actually better for reminding you than the main site. It'll also give you extra info, like letting you know when something you've bought has been dispatched or when you've received a bid on something you're selling. You can also choose to turn these notifications off if you're not that bothered, but that could mean you don't win something you'd set your heart on!

With eBay Mobile, you need never miss out on an auction ever again, no matter where you are or what you're doing.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

GALLSTONES



Anita Crawley from Hemel Hempstead sold 42 gallstones that she'd had removed in an operation in 2011. She thought they looked like mint humbugs and might make a nice necklace, but she was uncomfortable with wearing them herself. Instead, she put them on eBay – where someone snapped them up for just 99p. Apparently, eBay didn't notice, because human items are actually banned from sale!

Case Study: Josh Saco

If you're a collector, eBay is a real treasure trove of obscure delights...

For me, eBay has shifted the meaning of the word 'rare,'" said Josh Saco. "There's nothing rare any more. It's just about how much you're willing to pay for something. I've gotten 16mm prints that are one of maybe two in the world, and they're genuinely rare. But my experience with eBay has shown me that if you wait and you're patient, it will show up."

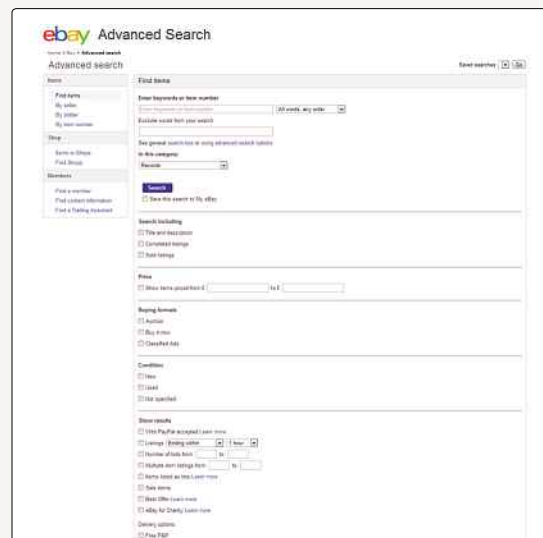
Josh runs cult cinema club Cigarette Burns, which shows all sorts of old and obscure films in venues all around London. He's a horror movie aficionado and an avid collector of both vinyl records and 16mm film prints. For him, eBay is an amazing resource. He's been a member since 2001, and remembers that when he first found out about the site. Previously, he'd been collecting records the old fashioned way, by signing up for mailing lists and ordering through the post.

"I used to get mailing lists in tiny five-point print, photocopied down several times," he told us. "There'd be eight double-sided A4 pages, each with three or four columns, and you'd pore over it and hope you could get your cheque to the guy before someone else did. The idea of eBay was like 'Oh my God, this is amazing!' You could get things really cheaply and you could order stuff from overseas. It was cool."

Josh is particularly interested in punk records, which is a particularly cutthroat kind of collecting. He knows the owners of his local record shops, who will alert him if something he wants comes in, but he still finds eBay useful for tracking down items that don't come along often. "There was this record by the band Resistance 77 that was super rare. I think there were only 500 or 1,000 pressed, and I know people who've looked for that record their whole lives and never found it. But I've



▲ Josh Saco runs the Cigarette Burns film club, and collects obscure films via eBay



▲ Use the Advanced Search options to make your searches more relevant

ended up with four different copies through eBay, which I've bought for anywhere between \$12 and £110."

To get to those kinds of rare finds, Josh spends a lot of his time on the site, using it has become a sort of hobby. "If I have a moment when I'm bored and haven't got anything else to do, I'll start scrolling through stuff on eBay."

To score bargains on much-sought after obscure items, Josh has developed a few cunning search strategies. He likes it when things have been listed incorrectly, since that means fewer people will have seen the auction. "When people spell things wrong, that's awesome," he said. "There are certain spelling errors that are really common, so you can look for those. When you're talking about a film, it's tougher, but you can look under alternate titles. I got [obscure 70s giallo] *The Strange Vice of Mrs Wardh* on 16mm, but it was listed as 'Next', because that was what was on the title card. If you've got a print collector who's into noir or musicals and not horror, and he's got this weird print called 'Next', it'll be listed as that. And if I listed it as *The Strange Vice of Mrs Wardh*, I could resell it for three or four times what I paid for it.

"And if you're looking for a band or a specific record, use the Advanced Search options to search in descriptions, because maybe what you're after is being sold as part of a lot, and the person doesn't really know what they've got. They sometimes put the full list in the

Josh's Top Tips For Buying Collectibles On eBay

- **Wait until the last second to bid**
"I don't like to put bids in early. I don't tend to bid until the last ten seconds of an auction. If you bid early, people can push you into raising your bid."
- **Decide how much you want to pay**
"Something's only worth what it's worth to you. If I know something has a market value of £15, but I

genuinely want it, I'll put in a bid of £20. If something's worth £15 but you're willing to pay £25, then that's what it's really worth."

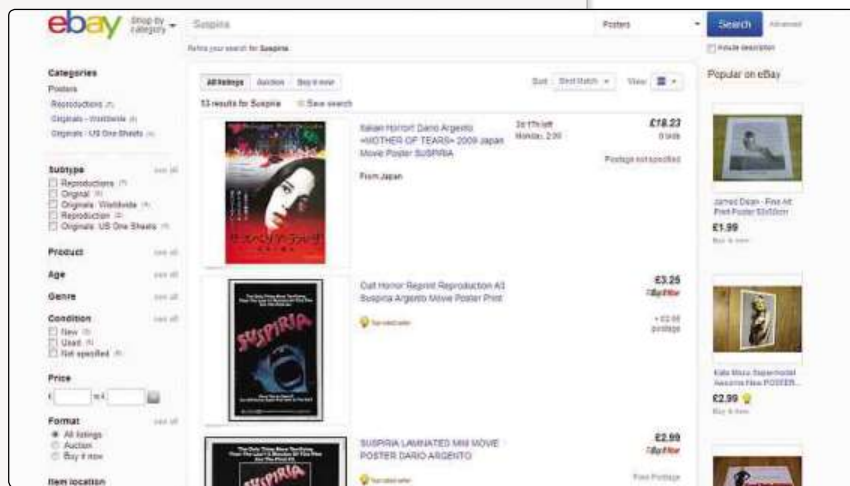
- **Trawl other people's collections**
"If you only have a vague notion what you're looking for and you find someone who's got something cool, go to the seller's page and look at his other items."

item description, so you might find what you're looking for that way. You can find things and resell them for a profit if you just know how to list things properly."

Josh also likes the rush of trying to win an auction at the last possible moment. He doesn't use automated sniper programs to do it for him, though he used to. "I don't need anything that badly," he said. Instead, he likes the adrenaline rush of watching an auction, then waiting until the final seconds of an auction to get his bid in. "It's fun to sit there and watch the little timer count down. You're like 'I've got seven seconds; can I put in a number, confirm the bid, wait for the page to refresh and not be outbid in that time?' If you lose, you've lost it fair and square. You can really get into it; you get a proper eBay high."

Waiting till the last possible moment has its risks, though, and sometimes he's missed out on winning items he wanted – either because someone else put in a higher bid and he didn't have enough time to bid again or because he hadn't put in an early bid and forgot to watch the end of the auction. Despite those occasional losses, though, Josh isn't too upset; he reasons that eventually another copy will show up, if he's just patient enough.

Although he buys a lot of stuff from eBay, Josh rarely if ever gets ripped off by dishonest sellers, because he's careful about who he deals with. "Always check feedback," he advised. "You should always, always



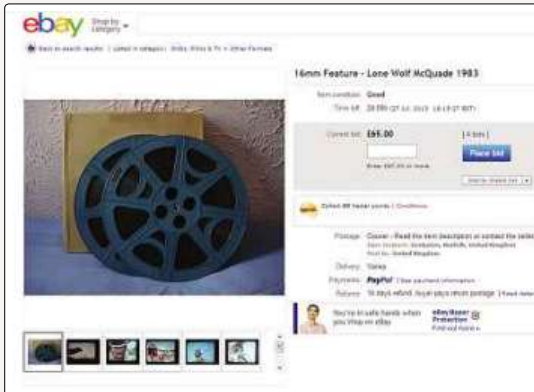
▲ eBay is home to all sorts of film memorabilia

check for negative feedback. If there's somebody with a low feedback score, like under 15 or 20, and they've got two negatives, I would not deal with them."

And although Josh collects music and film on older formats, like 16mm and vinyl, he uses eBay for more common items as well. "I get a lot of DVDs and Blu-ray from eBay too. I like supporting physical stores, but I stand a better chance of getting stuff cheaper on eBay. And there's that immediacy – I'm like 'I want that' and then I go on eBay and there it is."



▲ Records sold in job lots might contain all kinds of rare delights



▲ You never know what kinds of film will turn up on eBay



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CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

Let's Start Selling

Your listing is your virtual shop window, so if you want to draw in the punters, it pays to spend some time doing it properly

Thousands of people sell things on eBay every day, because it's so easy and convenient. Over the past few years, eBay has given its website an overhaul, simplifying and streamlining both the buying and selling processes so that it's all as straightforward and easy as possible to use. That means there's no need to be nervous about setting up your own eBay shop: it's been designed to be easy, and help is available every step of the way.

To get started, all you have to do is click on eBay's 'Sell' button. It appears in the menu bar, in the top-left of almost every page on eBay, so it's never difficult to find. And there's no messing about: as soon as you click that button, you'll be whisked off into eBay's listing wizard, which will take you through the listing process one step at a time.

To give you an extra helping hand, our guide here walks you through the various options and stages, so open a web browser, head to the eBay website, and we'll get started.

Before you know it, you'll be running your own eBay empire...

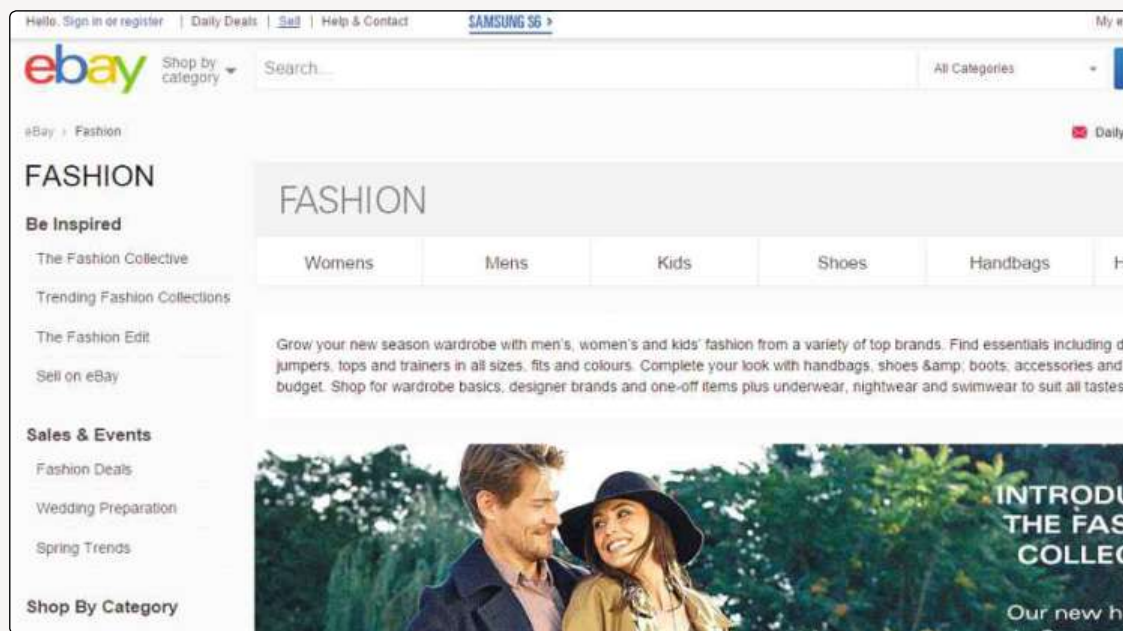
WHAT TO SELL?

It's probably a good idea to start by selling a low-value item: for one thing, it means you won't need to worry about it too much and, for another, if you've never sold anything on eBay before, you won't have any seller feedback, so buyers are more likely to take a chance on something small than on something valuable. Once you've built up your reputation for being reliable, you can move onto bigger items.

Got something to sell? Take a moment to give it a good look over. Do you know how old it is, where it came from and what condition it's in? The more you know about your item, the better listing you'll be able to create. You'll also need to be able to photograph the item and know how much it weighs, so set aside a bit of time to work on your first listing. The process is very straightforward, and you'll be able to creating listings in a matter of seconds once you're used to it, but it's important to make sure you know what you're doing and what you're selling.

DID YOU KNOW?

eBay has localised websites all over the world, with a presence in over 30 countries, including the USA, UK, Australia, Germany, France, Canada, Israel, South Korea and India. You don't need to worry about learning a foreign language, though; you'll be able to see items from all over the world through eBay UK!



▲ Click 'Sell' in the menu bar to launch the listing wizard



▲ eBay's listing wizard is easy to use

GIVE IT A NAME

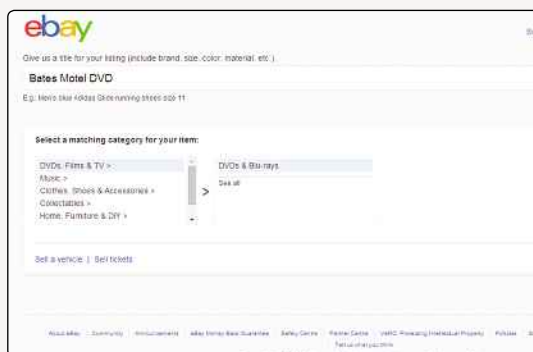
The first thing you'll be prompted to do on the selling page is to give your listing a title. This is one of the most important parts of the whole process, because this title is what potential buyers will see when they're looking through lists of items.

While you're creating your listing, imagine you're a customer. Sometimes, you might go out shopping without any concrete idea of what you want to buy. You might go into a book shop and wander through the aisles, picking up anything that's on special offer or which has a cover that catches your eye. You already know what kind of things you like, but you're also interested in seeing what's available.

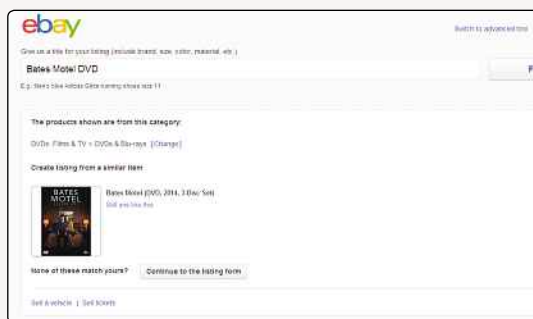
On eBay, you can browse in much the same way: you pick a category that sounds interesting, dig through the subcategories, browse through the pages and pages of auctions and eventually see something that sounds relevant to your interests at a price you're willing to pay. In that instance, the title of an auction might be the thing that catches your eye and tempts you to click on an auction page. You might want to make your title descriptive and informative – the kind of thing you'd like to buy, yourself.

Other times, though, you might know exactly what you're looking for. In the real world, you'd head for the shop you know stocks the thing you want, ask the assistant where it's kept, and grab it straight off the shelf without stopping to look around. That's the eBay equivalent of typing a keyword or even an exact title into the search box and clicking on the first match that pops up. If your title isn't accurate or doesn't include the right information, even someone who's looking for exactly the thing you're selling might not find it.

It's easy to rush the listing process, but if you do that, you might find yourself making mistakes or leaving out vital information. By imagining yourself as the buyer while creating a listing, you can think about the kinds of things that you'd want to know



▲ Choosing the most appropriate category is important



▲ eBay will recommend a category for you, if it can find similar items

about an item, and you're less likely to miss something out.

The fact that there are so many thousands of items on eBay means it's easy for some things to slip through the cracks, especially if they're labelled wrongly. By giving your listing a proper title, you're increasing the number of people who'll potentially see it – and bid on it. And the more bidders you attract, the more money you can potentially make.

Don't get carried away, though. An eBay listing title has to be under 80 characters long, so make sure you only include the most important information. The eBay website helpfully gives you some examples of things you might want to include, so stick to this guidance and you won't go far wrong.

Once you've entered your title, click 'Get Started' to move onto the next stage.

CHOOSE A CATEGORY

The next thing you need to do is assign a category to your item. Imagine you're browsing a shop again. If you wanted to buy a loaf of bread, you wouldn't look in the cheese aisle, and if you wanted to buy a new pair of shoes, you wouldn't go to a sandwich shop. Choosing the right category on eBay will mean that people will be able to easily find your item, and that's really what you're aiming for here.

WEBSITE REVIEW

AUCTION NUDGE

www.auctionnudge.com



Want to promote your eBay listings on your website? This site will help you create a snippet of code that you can easily insert into other sites – handy, if you're a blogger who wants to give their eBay sales a bit of a, well, nudge.

All you have to do is type in your eBay username, and the code will be generated immediately, ready to use. As well as using it to display your active listings, you can create code to display your profile and feedback scores. And if you're a WordPress user, there's a section specifically dedicated to creating code appropriate for WordPress. It's simple but potentially really useful.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

VANDALISED WALL



Graffiti artist Banksy's work can command ridiculous sums. A painting on the side of a building on the Portobello Road, west London, went for £208,100 on eBay. Removal and repairs to the wall are estimated to have cost £5,000.

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INTRODUCTORY SELLING

▲ You get 80 characters to give your item a title, so make them count

When you create a listing, eBay will help you find the right category for your item by using the title you entered to look for similar items listed by other sellers. Using that information, it'll then suggest a category for you to use.

For example, if you were selling a Blu-ray copy of *The Muppets* movie, eBay would suggest you list it under DVDs, Films & TV > DVDs & Blu-rays, based on the fact that it's where other sellers have listed the same thing. At this point in the listings process, eBay will also display those other sellers' items, along with a handy 'Sell one like this' button. If someone else is selling an identical item to yours, then you can use the data they've added to their listing to complete parts of yours.

For now, let's assume there are no other listings like yours. If eBay has correctly worked out which category your item should be listed under, you can click through to the next stage. If not or if it hasn't suggested a category, you'll need to find the right one yourself. There are more than 30 main categories and several thousand subcategories, so

▲ Item specifics can help your item appear in more searches

take your time and choose carefully. If you list your item in anything but the most appropriate category, it's like you're putting the bread in among the apples. Scroll through the list of top-level categories to find the most appropriate match, and you'll see the list of subcategories appear. Make sure to read through the whole list to make sure you've chosen the most appropriate category, then click through to start filling in the rest of your listing.

UPLOAD A PICTURE

The next thing you need to do is add a photograph of your item. This is one instance where that old cliché about pictures being worth a thousand words might just be true: an item illustrated with at least one good image will receive hugely more interest – and perhaps higher bids – than an otherwise identical item described by words alone.

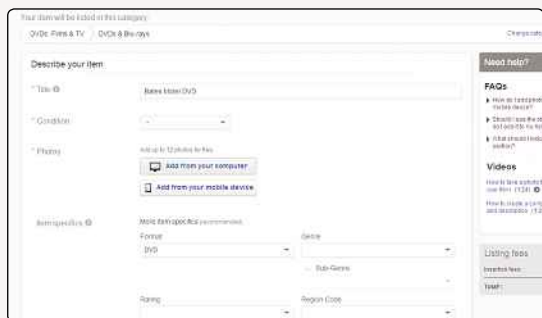
The first picture you add to your listing is free. To get started, click 'Add photos'. A new window will open, letting you navigate through photos stored on your computer to find the one you want to upload.

DID YOU KNOW?

London-based Romanians Nicolae and Adriana Cretanu stole £300,000 by instructing 'Second Chance' bidders to wire the money to their bank accounts in return for non-existent goods. They were ultimately caught and jailed, though police say the con they ran is still going on.



▲ Free photo editing software can help your photos look their best



▲ You can easily add up to 12 photos with eBay's uploader

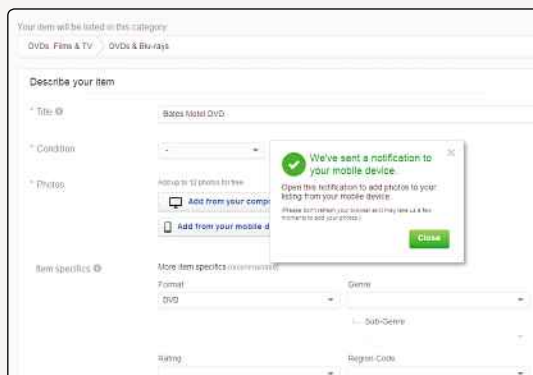
Find it, click on it, and it'll be uploaded to your listing as the main image. We'll talk more about what makes a good photo for an eBay listing later, if you need help with that bit.

eBay used to charge sellers to add more than one photo to a listing (an extra 12p per photo), but the rules have changed more recently, and you can now have up to 12 images of your item for free.

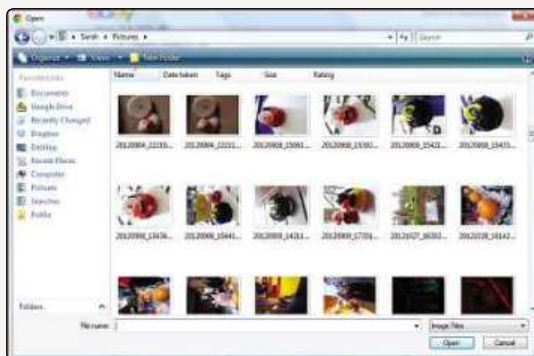
That doesn't necessarily mean you need to add that many; it depends what you're selling. If it's a DVD, you probably don't need more than one, since they're pretty standard items, but for an item of clothing or something worth a lot of money, you might want to put up more pictures. Showing an item from multiple different angles and including a close-up might reassure an unsure browser and encourage them to put in a bid, so if you're selling something unusual or something where the details are important, think about including at least one extra photo in your listing.

Once you've uploaded your photos, you can use eBay's built-in editing tools to make a few quick changes to your images. Click on the 'Edit' link to open the editor and you'll see the available choices. If your photo is the wrong way up, you can rotate it. If it's too big or you want to focus on a particular detail, you can crop the edges. You can even adjust the contrast and brightness of your photo, although the effectiveness of this tool is limited, so it's best to make sure your photo looks its best before uploading it to eBay.

Sellers used to have more photo options: until recently, eBay used to allow sellers to add self-hosted photo galleries to their listings. That means photos that were uploaded to a seller's own web space could be inserted into a listing, at no extra charge. However, that option has recently been removed, because eBay wants you to use its own hosting service to add photos to your listing – and pay the fees that go along with them. If you're particularly tech savvy, there is a workaround: using HTML, you can insert pictures hosted on your own web space into the item



▲ You can upload pictures from your computer or your mobile device, if you're using a tablet or mobile phone



▲ Leaf through your folders to find the right image

description that you'll fill in later on. Otherwise, you'll just have to use eBay's hosting.

A final word on photos, for now: depending on what you're selling, you might consider using a stock or catalogue image of your item, but be careful. If you're selling something that's brand new or in pristine condition, using a stock image is fine, but if your item has been modified or damaged in any way, buyers will want to see the actual item in question. Using stock photos can also seem suspicious, so when you're selling a high-value item, do try to take your own photos. It reassures buyers that you really have the item in your possession and aren't trying to rip them off.

SELECT ITEM SPECIFICS

Next, you can complete the item specifics. First, you need to specify what kind of condition your item is in. Options range from New, Like New, Very Good, Good and Acceptable. Obviously, if the item is in a condition that can't be considered 'Acceptable', you probably shouldn't be selling it!

If you're not sure which category your item comes under, hover over the buttons to read a fuller description of what each term means. As you'll see, 'New' items should still be in their original, sealed packaging; 'Like New' means it's

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

IRAQI RELIC

In December 2007, someone tried to sell a 4,000-year-old clay tablet smuggled from Iraq on eBay Switzerland. Swiss police confiscated the item and prosecuted the seller.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

FRIENDSHIP FOR A YEAR



Everybody needs a good friend, and one chap was offering just that – but only for a year. This "guitar playing songwriting son of a gun" would send weekly emails to the auction winner and be their online friend for 12 months. Bidding ended at \$10.50.

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INTRODUCTORY SELLING



▲ Multiple images are shown below your main image as an interactive slideshow



▲ You can choose to enlarge the image to take a closer look as well



▲ If you're selling a gadget, you could use a stock photo to illustrate your listing

been taken out of its shrink wrap but has no visible wear or damage and is completely intact; 'Very Good' is an item that's been used, carefully, but doesn't show any signs of wear and tear; 'Good' is something that still works and has all its parts, but maybe has sustained some minor damage, like folded pages in a book or scuff marks on a CD box; and 'Acceptable' means it works but might have some pieces missing or some obvious damage.

If the condition of your item is anything other than New or Like New, you can elaborate further in the item description, and you might also want to make sure that the photos you use show exactly what condition the item is in.

Underneath the condition boxes, you'll see some further item specifics. You don't have to fill these in, but the more information you give about your item the more likely people are to want to buy it, so

it might be worth taking a few minutes to use the drop-down boxes to fill in some information here. The specifics will depend on what kind of item you're listing so, for example, for DVDs and Blu-rays, you can fill in Format, Edition, Release Year, Genre (and sub-genre), Director, Style/Movement, Rating, Region Code and Leading Role. Some of these are text fields, where you can enter information; others let you choose from a predefined list.

Because these fields are optional, many sellers don't bother with them, preferring instead to leave them all blank. However, when buyers perform searches, they can opt to only see results that fulfil certain criteria, so if you haven't filled in the box that tells them the information they're looking for, you might be missing out on sales.

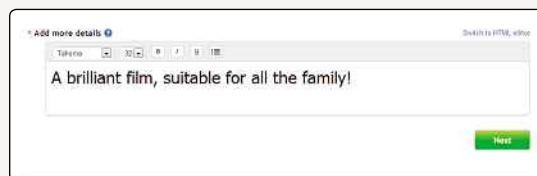
COMPOSE YOUR DESCRIPTION

Now it's time for the main attraction: your item description. A poor description can mean low bids and even no sale, while a fabulous description can send the bidding through the roof. Remember, though, that it pays to be honest; anything misleading here can be grounds for a buyer to ask for a refund, so stick to the truth!

This is another time when it's worth putting yourself in your potential buyers' shoes. What can you tell them about your item that'll make them want to buy it? Spend some time thinking about it. If you're selling something that belongs to you, you must have bought it at some point, so what made it appeal to you? What's good about it? If it's rare, say so. If you're selling a book or DVD, find a positive

DID YOU KNOW?

As it expanded to become the world's number one online auction house, eBay swallowed up several of its rivals, including Up4Sale.com, Alando, MercadoLibre.com, iBazar, Baazee.com and Tradera.



▲ The Standard window provides basic formatting tools



▲ Use HTML to truly customise your listing

▲ Set your own starting price to get the ball rolling

review of it to tell buyers why it's good; if you're selling a gadget, tell them what it can do, and make sure to include the brand name. You buyer will only know what you tell them about your item, so if there's something about it that makes it special, be absolutely sure you include it in the item description.

Also, If you've mentioned that your item isn't in pristine condition any more, then this is a good time to detail exactly why not. A buyer might assume the worst, but the item description gives you a chance to reassure them. Plus, maybe its history is interesting! Several otherwise unremarkable items have been sold on eBay because they had an interesting story to go with them. You never know what might appeal to a collector!

We'll go into more detail about how to make your listing as appealing as possible in a separate article. For now, while the most important thing about an item's description is obviously what it says, you should know that you can make it look a bit more interesting by using eBay's formatting tools too. You can enter your description using either the Standard window or the HTML window (click the links to switch between the two). Private sellers usually use the Standard window, which includes some options to help bolster and brighten your text. At the top of the box, there's a toolbar giving you basic word-processing functions – font, size, colour, bold, centre and so on. You can also insert bullet points and give your spelling the once over.

The HTML window allows you to build up your description like a web page. This is the approach often taken by business sellers; it requires some effort and a little bit of skill, but the results tend to be more professional. You can even use HTML to add a few more pictures to your listing, so if you know what you're doing, why not take a bit of time to make your listing really shine?

When you've finished, click the Next button to move onto the next stage.



▲ Check out what other sellers are charging for an idea of how much you should ask for...



▲ ...but be sure to check out other sources too!

SETTING THE PRICE

Next, it's time to start thinking about money. Although eBay is best known for its auction-style listings, there are actually two different sorts of listings you can choose from: auction and fixed price. Select the one you want by simply clicking on the appropriate link.

If you choose to list your item as an auction, it'll be run pretty much as you'd expect: people bid against each other over a set period of time and the person who bids the highest in that time wins the item. The starting price for bids is up to you; to set it, type the lowest amount you're willing to accept for your item into the box on this screen.

Not sure how much your item might be worth? Click on the 'How other sellers priced it' link, and you'll see other listings that are the same or similar to yours. That should give you a good feel

▲ eBay has a Fee Calculator set up, so you can see how much you'll be expected to pay for your listing before you start

WEBSITE REVIEW

MONEY SAVING EXPERT

forums.moneysavingexpert.com

★★★★☆



If anything, the problem with the forums at MoneySavingExpert is that there's too much material to wade through, with little help in filtering it out. The eBay specific forum alone is bulging with questions, help, information and deals, some of which simply isn't going to be relevant to you. You'll need to sort through the rants too.

Nevertheless, there is gold to be found. Few discussion boards online are as lively as the ones you find at MoneySavingExpert, and the eBay forum is no exception. It's fast too, which means it's a good first place to look for new deals and information. Worth a look.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

FOAMHENGES



A life-sized replica of Stonehenge, made from foam, was sold in 2005. The reproduction, nicknamed 'Foamhenge', was built for a Channel 5 live event and needed 14 articulated lorries to transport it.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

List as an auction ? | List as fixed price ?

We recommend you list this as an auction. Buyers are almost twice as likely to purchase your item when you list it as an auction.

★ Enter a price

£ How other sellers priced it

▲ You can choose to set a fixed price for your item...

List as an auction ? | Alternate option: Fixed price ?

★ Enter a starting price

£ 2.50 How other sellers priced it

☒ Add a Buy it now option so buyers can get it without bidding (fee applies)

Enter a Buy it now price

£ 5.00

▲ ...or get the best of both worlds

for how much you can get for your item – and if you really want to make sure you sell yours, you can also choose to price it lower than the competition. You might also want to check out how much your item sells for new, if it's still available. If you set your starting price unreasonably high, you'll probably scare off prospective buyers, so make sure you know what your item is really worth.

CHOOSE AN AUCTION TYPE

Now, decide what kind of listing you want. You can either set your listing as a tradition auction style listing, where potential customers enter bids to try to win your item, or you can set it up as a Buy It Now listing, where you set a price and buyers will decide whether to pay it or not. To create a Buy It Now listing, you'll need a verified PayPal account and a feedback rating of ten or higher. This enables a buyer to cut out the bidding process altogether and click a button to purchase your item immediately (thus ending the auction).

eBay recommends you create an auction style listing, as it reckons buyers are almost twice as likely to buy it in an auction than as a fixed price object, but it's really up to you. (eBay will also recommend you start the bidding at 99p to attract more customers, but if your item is valuable, you don't have to take its advice!)

If you want to get the best of both worlds, you can add a Buy It Now price to your auction. A small

Wooden Dolls House, Furniture and Figures from Early Learning Centre

Starting at £25.99

Buy It Now £70.00

▲ A standard auction in action (with the Buy It Now option)

Dorling Black Forest Jackalope or Song Clock

Price £1,500.00

Buy it now £1,500.00

Best Offer

▲ A fixed-price 'auction' in action (with the Best Offer option)

fee applies if you want to do both, based on the price you set for your Buy It Now option:

- Buy It Now price £0.01-£4.99: £0.10
- Buy It Now price £5-£14.99: £0.20
- Buy It Now price: £15-£24.99: £0.30
- Buy It Now price: £25 or more: £0.50

LISTING FEES

As a private eBay seller, you get 20 free listings every month. If you want to add more listings than that, you'll be charged a 35p listing fee per item.

However, it's not quite as simple as that: something else to be aware of is that if you're listing a road vehicle, caravan, boat or aircraft, this falls under the umbrella of eBay Motors. The fee structure in that case is a bit different: there's a £10 insertion fee for either an auction or fixed price listing, while eBay classified ads cost £14.99. For more detail, see pages.ebay.co.uk/help/sell/motorfees.html.

FINAL FEES

While you're thinking about how much you want to charge for your item, it's worth remembering that eBay will take a chunk of your profits once your item has sold. For everything except property (where there's no final value fee) and motor vehicles (which, again, are structured differently), eBay will take 10% of the final sale price as its fee, up to a maximum of £250.

DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately 15% of eBay deals are cross-border transactions, with the seller in one country and the buyer in another.

▲ Choose your auction's duration

If you're going to be selling your item in an auction, you don't have total control over the final sale price, but make sure your starting price will make the sale worthwhile once you've taken out both the listing fees and the final value fees.

Don't be alarmed by the idea of fees, though, because you should always know how much eBay is going to charge. There's an eBay fee calculator available, so you can figure out in advance how much you want to charge and how much eBay will take in fees. And while you're setting up your listings, you'll see a mini listings calculator at the side of the screen, which will be automatically updated as you make changes to your listing.

eBay is very up front about its charges, so you should never find yourself in a situation where you suddenly have to pay more than you were expecting. Plus, in most cases, eBay's fees don't really add up to much. It's only if you're going to be selling something very cheaply, that you'll need to be aware that you won't see much in the way of profit.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

eBay lets you choose how long you want your listing to run for. It offers you the option of running it for three, five, seven or ten days. For standard auctions (but not fixed-price ones), a one-day option is also available (so long as you have a feedback rating of five or higher). For fixed-price auctions (but not standard ones), there's a 30-day option too. The snag with that, though, is that it trebles every listing fee except the insertion fee. The default length is seven days, but you can easily change that by clicking any of the other Duration buttons.

Ordinarily, your auction begins immediately after you submit your listing. That means it'll finish at the same time of day it begins and one, three, five, seven, ten or 30 days later (depending on what duration you've chosen). If you'd rather have it end at a different time of day, you can set up a schedule. For £0.06 (and as long as you have a credit or debit card linked to your account for billing purposes), you can have your auction start at any time you choose and on any day up to three weeks into the future.

▲ Specify when you'd like your auction to begin

It might sound silly, but there's actually a very good reason you might want to change the time and date of your listing. According to eBay's statistics, most sales take place over the weekend, when most people are browsing the site, and an auction ending in the afternoon is likely to get more attention than one ending first thing in the morning or halfway through the night.

As always, you're looking to get as many eyeballs on your listing page as possible, and tweaking the timing is one more way you can do that. Ideally, you'd figure out in advance when you want your auction to end and set it up accordingly, but if that's a bit too much like hard work, you can just use the duration buttons and the scheduling option to give yourself the best chance of making a hefty profit.

SHIPPING AND STUFF

Next up, you'll need to set up the shipping options. Again, eBay will try to make things easy for you by offering you the shipping option it thinks you should use, especially if you're going to be selling something that's a standard size, like a CD or DVD. Then you can either choose to ask the buyer to pay the postage, or you can choose to list your item with free postage, which means you'll pay for it.

Free postage is often a big selling point with buyers, so if there are a lot of similar items available, using this option might make your listing more attractive than the others. Just be sure to check you'll still make a profit off your item once you've paid for the shipping; you might want to bump up your starting price to cover it. Remember to also factor in packaging when you're working out your shipping costs. If you'll need to buy a box, envelope or packing materials to post your item, you'll have to pay for them!

▲ Watch out as the listing fees go up...

WEBSITE REVIEW

AUCTION CUT

www.auctioncut.com

★★★★☆



There are far livelier online discussion forums dedicated to eBay, but that doesn't mean that you should overlook what Auction Cut has to offer. There are generally only a handful of users online at any one time, but the ones who do log on tend to have something to say.

There are discussions for eBay users of varying levels of experience, and it's a gentle place to get started too. The colour scheme, however, really doesn't help matters much. Still, do give Auction Cut a chance. You might just find yourself losing a few more hours to it than you'd planned for.

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INTRODUCTORY SELLING

▲ Charity begins at eBay

If you don't want to go for the shipping option eBay has offered you, click on the radio button next to 'Create your own postage' option. A new set of options will appear, and you can choose from a wide array of different shipping options, including using different Royal Mail services or using an alternate courier. You can also specify that the buyer must collect the item from you in person, which might make sense if you're selling something bulky like a TV or piano.

Once you've chosen a method, you can enter a price for this shipping method, and again you can specify whether the buyer needs to pay it or whether you'll cover it. You can even choose to offer a couple of different shipping methods, so the buyer can decide how much they're willing to pay to get it faster or to get their item insured.

Finally, you can add shipping options for international buyers. Sending even a small item abroad can cost significantly more than sending it inland, so it's worth checking out how much shipping costs are so that you can add an accurate estimate to your listing. Otherwise, you might get a nasty shock at the post office! Handily, eBay offers a link to a postage calculator on the shipping page, so click to open it and run through the process – specifying how big your item is, how much it weighs and where it's going – to get an estimate of how much you'll need to charge. If you're going to be selling a lot of different items on eBay, it's probably worth investing in some

▲ Decide how your item will be delivered

▲ Do you want to ship abroad?

weighing scales to ensure your shipping charges are as accurate as possible.

CHECK YOUR LISTING

The last step is to review your listing, and make sure all the details are correct before you make it live on eBay. Almost everything on this page can be changed if it's not correct, so spend some time reading through every section.

You'll see your listing title is at the top: does it accurately tell your buyers what you're selling? Now is a good time to make sure you haven't got any spelling mistakes in your title, because that

DID YOU KNOW?

eBay founder Pierre Omidyar wanted to call his auction site echobay.com, being a spin-off of his consultancy firm, Echo Bay Technology Group. The domain was already taken by a gold mining company called Echo Bay Mines, so he shortened it to eBay.com.

▲ How will your buyer pay you?

▲ What's your returns policy?



▲ Preview your listing and make final edits before putting it up

can seriously affect your ability to sell your item; you won't get many bids if people can't easily find your listing. Are your auction settings properly selected? If you want to change your mind about your Buy It Now or starting price, you can click the Edit button here to alter these.

The selling preferences section is full of options that you haven't yet been able to specify, so if you don't change these, eBay will set them for you. That might mean you're committing to something you didn't mean to, so click the Edit button to open up the options here. The first thing to change is the dispatch time: this is a drop-down menu that only allows you to pick one, two or three working days. Whatever you choose, your buyer will expect you to stick to it, so make sure you really will be able to post their item within the time frame you specify.

Next, you can choose whether or not you're going to accept returns on your item. There are only two options – yes or no – and by default, eBay will set this up so that you won't accept returns. That might be okay with you, but if you're selling clothing or something else that the buyer might expect to be able to try on, you might want to be a bit more lenient to attract more buyers.

Also, it's worth noting that you can't refuse returns on items that are broken or not as described, so you can't use this to wriggle out of your legal obligations when it comes to selling things on eBay.

Perhaps the most important thing to check on this page is the payment methods you're offering. Because eBay owns PayPal, the two services are intertwined, and accepting PayPal payments is obligatory. You'll see that the tick box next to the PayPal option is checked, and you can't deselect it. You can, however, choose to also accept personal cheques and postal orders as well as PayPal, if you want to but, let's face it, PayPal is more convenient.

A text box is provided for you to enter the email address associated with your PayPal account, and it's very important that you don't make any typos

Listing fees	Photos:	£0.12
	Buy it now price:	£0.15
	Insertion fee:	£0.10
	Total:	£0.37

* If your item sells, you will be charged a final value fee based on a percentage of the final sale price.
 ** Stated fees include 15% Luxembourg VAT where applicable. Learn more about rounding and how VAT applies to you.
 Your listing will be posted on the eBay site and can be viewed in My eBay. Your listing may not be immediately searchable by keyword or category for several hours (or up to 24 hours in some circumstances); an eBay can't guarantee exact listing duration in search results. Where your listing appears in search results may be based on certain factors including listing format, and time, keywords, price, RRP cost, feedback and detailed seller ratings. By clicking the List It button, you agree to pay the fees above, accept the listing conditions above, and assume full responsibility for the content of the listing and item offered.

▲ Time to groan: see how much it's all going to cost

here. Whatever address is entered into this box is the address the buyer will pay their money to, and if you miss out or add in any letters to your address, you might find your money ends up sitting in someone else's account instead.

It sounds silly, but please do be careful when you're typing in your email address, and double-check to make sure you haven't made any mistakes. A single mistyped character could be a costly mistake.

Lastly, you'll need to enter your postcode, so that eBay (and buyers) know where your item will be coming from. It also helps give buyers an idea of how long their item might take to get to them or, if you've opted for a collection only shipping option, whether you're close enough for them to get to you.

FREE RELISTING

If, for some reason, your item doesn't sell the first time you list it on eBay, you can use eBay's free relisting feature. That means your item will be automatically relisted for free. eBay will let you use this option up to three times, and you won't have to pay any more insertion fees for any of these listings.

You also won't need to go through the whole process of adding pictures, categories and details, but your item will be available on the site for longer and will hopefully find a buyer before the three more listings are up. If it doesn't, you might want to consider why no one's bidding. Maybe your price is too high, your title and description aren't right or there's something wrong with your item that means no one wants it.

To enable these free relistings, all you have to do is click on the tick box and eBay will take care of it for you.

LIST IT!

Finally, when you're sure you've entered all your details correctly and you're ready, click the List It button at the bottom of the screen. Your listing will be submitted to eBay, and soon it'll appear on the site, ready for someone to come along and hand over their cash!

WEBSITE REVIEW

TYPZOZAY

www.typozay.co.uk



Minimal. That's an accurate word you could use to describe TypoZay, comfortably one of the sparser misspelling search tools available on the internet. It's never been anything else, to be fair, but when rivals offer more comprehensive services, better presented, then you do have to wonder if TypoZay has had its day.

In its corner is its Google-like search simplicity and the fact that it does generate relevant results. By not including search qualifiers, though, you tend to have to hunt through the results to find what it was you were looking for in the first place. In truth, you're better off elsewhere.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

TEXAS GHOST TOWN



An uninhabited town 62 miles outside San Antonio was sold for just over \$3m (£1.45m). The town, known as Albert, contained a schoolhouse, a dancehall and a bar, along with a tractor shed, a three-bedroom house and peach and pecan orchards.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

What Makes A Good eBay Listing?

Getting your listing right is essential, so what can you do to make yours stand out from the crowd?

If eBay gave statistics of those items that sell well, they'd show that the impression presented by the listing is crucial in making sales and in attracting bids. Creating listings that give your items the very best chance is a vital skill that any successful seller needs to master. The listing performs a number of crucial functions, including:

- Giving clear and concise information about what's being offered.
- Outlining under what conditions sale is offered.
- Providing confidence that the seller is a good eBay.
- Giving buyers an opportunity to ask questions.
- Initiating the mechanism to buy or bid.

If your listing succeeds in this respect, then the chance of your item selling for what you want or more is dramatically increased.

MIXING A PERFECT EBAY CAKE

For a successful listing to meet all the requirements of the checklist above, think about it like making a cake: if you leave out even a single important ingredient, then the cake could be a disaster. With that in mind, before you start to create and edit a listing on eBay, it's worth collecting together all the information you need to sell your item, putting most

of it in a document, which you can easily cut and paste from in order to save time. You'll need:

- The title of your item.
- The category it falls into (maybe more than one).
- The condition of the item – new or used.
- A full description, telling the prospective buyer what they'll get for their money.
- A listing template.
- A picture, showing the item.
- A starting price.
- Planned duration of the sale.
- Shipping cost details.
- Accepted payment types.
- Returns policy.

You need to consider each of these things before listing an item, as they can all have an impact on how much money you get and the number of people that are likely to be interested. It may look an exhausting list, but it's actually quite straightforward, and much of it revolves around simple common sense. Let's go through it in a bit more detail.

TITLE

This is the single most important decision you need to make about any listing, as the title is the reason

DID YOU KNOW?

As well as other auction houses, eBay has acquired an impressive list of diverse business interests. eBay owns online payment facilitators PayPal, Precision Buying Service and Billpoint, social networking site MeetUp.com and online classifieds site Craigslist. It bought Skype in 2005, but sold it again in 2009.



▲ The title is a valuable means to hook a customer. Which of these two listings is trying to give the most information?



◀ If you don't know what you're selling, it can be tough to persuade people that they want to buy it!

most potential customers will take a closer look at your item. A vague, incorrectly spelled or confusing title can easily get overlooked.

If other people are selling the same item, see what they're doing and follow the lead. You have 80 characters to play with in your title, so make the most of them.

For example, let's say the item is a golf club. In the title you need to get across the brand, model, style and condition, if you can fit that in. It's now common to use upper case, because it makes the title stand out more (although some potential buyers may equate this to shouting and thus give your listing a miss).

CATEGORY

As we've discussed, buyers that actively search eBay do it in two distinct ways. Some know exactly what they're looking for and search for that item specifically (for instance, a 30GB Apple iPod). Others know they want a type of item, but they're unsure what brand or model they'd like (so they might, perhaps, search for an MP3 player instead of specifically requesting an Apple iPod).

The second type of search is often category-based, and attracting those people requires that you put your listing in the right category for your item. If you're unsure, then try searching yourself and see where similar items to the one you're looking to list have been placed.

eBay allows you to place the listing against multiple categories, at an extra cost, with an increased viewing count likely if you choose to do so. For most people, though, just getting the category right is enough to attract interest.

There is a peculiar reverse logic that can also apply here. For whatever reason, items that appear in the wrong category can also get more attention. This is a risky strategy, because your item might be ignored and you might seem an inept seller, but it can work. As a rule, research the correct category and use that one.

CONDITION

New is good, and used is less so. However, don't be tempted to suggest that an item is new when it isn't. You'll rightly upset the buyer who might be tempted to ask for a refund or to complain. Unless an item is new, never mark it as such. What you can do to help promote a used item is to mention in the title or description a few more details – for example, 'as new' or 'perfect condition'.

Unless it's an item where the age is actually a selling point, most people want new or at least new-looking purchases.

DESCRIPTION

If the item that you're selling is one that eBay recognises (such as a DVD or CD), then a short description of it will automatically appear at the top of the listing. However, this information on its own is rarely enough to answer all of a buyer's questions.

Getting all the relevant information in this section will help the potential bidder decide if they want your item, so it's worth taking the time to make it clear exactly what you're selling. In general, the more information you provide, the better the listing will be, but keep it relevant to the customer. They might not want to know that you've ended a relationship using that phone or that you're selling

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

A GERMAN BABY

A Bavarian couple put their baby son on eBay as 'a joke'. The authorities didn't see the funny side and took the seven-month-old into care while they investigated the incident. eBay, of course, deleted the auction.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

an item to pay a parking fine. Good information to use in this section can be found on the brand or manufacturer's website, if one exists. A bit of rapid highlighting, copying and pasting could save you plenty of typing. And unless you have the wrong product, the details should be totally correct.

Please take note: eBay holds you responsible for making sure the information is accurate. Therefore, it's really important to get the description right and to not mislead people, otherwise there could be recriminations further down the line.

USING HTML TEMPLATES

When you're creating your eBay listing, you can just stick to the standard text input box. But if you want to make your listing stand out, you could use HTML to format your text, add images and generally make your listing feel a bit more like it's been designed.

There are plenty of HTML how-to guides available online, but if coding your own listings page from scratch sounds a bit intimidating, don't worry. There are a couple of ways you can add HTML to your pages without needing to learn a whole new language.

For starters, there are plenty of third-party templates available, from a wide range of sites. One of the biggest free suppliers is **Auctiva** (www.auctiva.com), where you'll find a huge selection of free templates to use. Other popular options are www.auctionsupplies.com/templates, and www.auctomize.com.

Alternatively, a large number of software tools are available that allow you to create a listing away from eBay and then post it to the site in a single operation. These all have their own template

designs from which you can choose. Some of these, such as The Seller Sourcebook (www.sellersourcebook.com), are online tools for which a subscription is payable for use.

Others, like Auction Ad Designer Pro (www.freeauctionhelp.com), provide a separate installable Windows application that creates the listing offline. The beauty of these tools is that you can work on a listing to the point where you're entirely happy with it before committing to uploading it and making it live on the eBay site. It also allows you to reload old listings and tweak them for repeat use, which can save lots of time.

If you intend to build a business through eBay or you plan on selling in significant quantities, then investing in a listings design tool might be a worthwhile exercise.

THE PICTURE

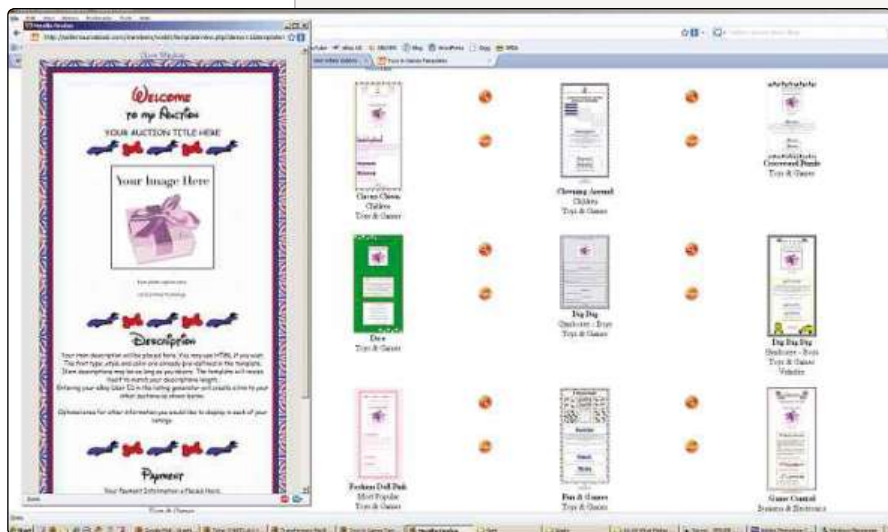
This one feature can be a real sale maker or breaker. A good picture can say a thousand words and convince a buyer that it's exactly what they want to bid on. Conversely, a poor image can confuse matters and persuade people not to bid or buy. It's also why this book focuses so much on images (there'll be more on this later).

eBay now lets sellers included up to 12 photos per listing, for free. In the old days, you could only attach one photo to your auction page before you had to start paying for extras, so understandably a lot of people would only put the one image. But now you can add more, why not take advantage? Extra pictures can enable your listing to show specific details of your item and can be a necessity when selling something like a car or antique.

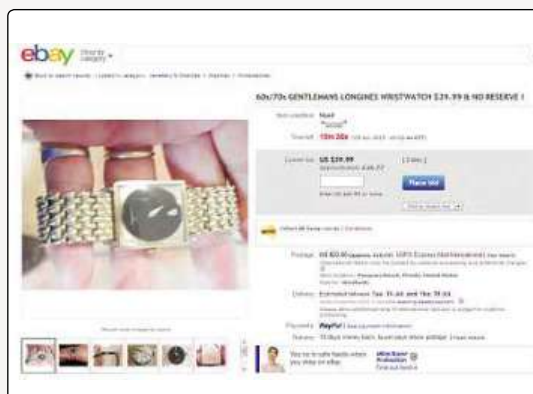
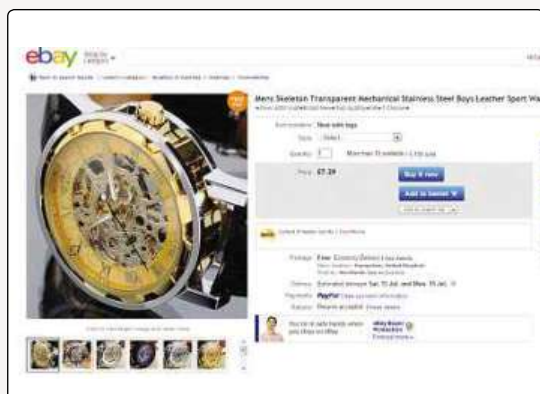
Not everything needs multiple pictures, of course; unless it's a first edition or a signed copy, you probably don't need to take 12 photos of a book. But for unique or high-value items they can be invaluable in interesting your customers.

If your sale item is new and unused, the best pictures can usually be sourced from online shops or the manufacturer's website, but if those aren't available you can take your own using any serviceable digital camera.

It used to be that eBay would only allow you to upload photos up to 800 x 800 pixels in size, but the guidelines have since been relaxed so you can add anything up to 7MB. It's unlikely you'd want to upload a picture bigger than that, but if you have a good camera, you might find images straight out of the camera are enormous. It's probably worth taking a bit of time to open your images in a photo-editing application (such as Adobe Photoshop Elements or Corel Paint Shop Pro) and doing a bit of work on them first. You might want to



▲ A template can give your listing a more professional touch



▲ Given the choice between these two watches, regardless of price, which one would you be more interested in?

crop out some of the background, for example, or just make sure that the item you're selling is displayed prominently in the centre of the photo. Once you've done that, resize the image and save it (usually in JPEG format) ready to be uploaded.

Adding a decent picture is one of the skills that many eBayers lack, and putting a good one on your listing could make a major difference. Try to follow these pointers:

- If you take the picture yourself, think about how it will look at a very small size alongside your item's title in a listings search.
- Close-up shots can easily be out of focus if your camera doesn't have a 'macro' feature or you don't use it properly.
- Try finding a simple location to shoot, where the background won't distract the viewer. A blank wall or hardwood floor is ideal.
- If the item is small, like a coin, then put some other well-known object or a ruler in the shot so that the bidder can get an idea of scale.
- eBay has image-adjustment tools for picture brightness and contrast, but it's better to get these things right in a photo-editing application before uploading the picture.
- Camera flash can make some items difficult to see correctly. The best pictures are taken outside in natural light where possible.
- If it's important that the item you're selling is functional, you should show it working properly in a picture.
- Defects like scratches and marks can be shown in a photo to explain how minor or not they are.
- Don't post a tiny or blurry picture. It only makes people suspicious that you're trying to hide something.

These are merely a few simple pointers regarding how to use images in your eBay listings.

We'll go into the topic of pictures in greater detail elsewhere in this book.

OTHER LISTING HINTS

If there's particularly important message for anyone creating a listing, it's simply this: don't put barriers between the item and your potential customers. It only takes one reason for them to click away to something else, so try not to give it to them.

The most common problem with any given listing is not providing sufficient information, leading the eBay user to assume it's either not the item they want or something they need. For example, if you offer Collection Only as a postage option, then it's a good idea to explain why. Maybe the item is just too heavy or large to practically ship, but don't assume the potential bidder knows this: say it.

The other sticking point is with any limitations that you've set. These could be countries that you'll post to, payment types you'll accept or a dozen other things. The more flexible you are in terms of these factors, the larger your potential audience will be, so only apply these restrictions if you must – if you don't feel comfortable with cheques, for example.

SUMMARY

Simple, common-sense rules apply. Present your sale item in the best possible light without resorting to exaggeration. Give as much information as possible and even encourage people to ask questions. Place the item in the correct category and be flexible about postage, international mailing and types of payments that you'll accept.

In short, you want to give your items the best possible chance to sell, at the best price you can get for them.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

WEDDING DRESS



After his divorce, 42-year-old Larry Star sold his wife's wedding dress on eBay. The auction attracted worldwide interest because of the hilarious commentary and pictures of Star wearing the dress. The winning bid was for \$3,850 (it only cost \$1,200 new), but the buyer backed out, so Star still has it. The sale turned him into a minor celebrity. Read all about it at www.weddingdressguy.com.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

BUCKET OF WATER

Justin Kelly of Bristol put a bucket of water on the site as a joke, but when people started bidding, he turned it into a charity auction for Oxfam. It raised £255.

Things You Can't Sell On eBay

Quite sensibly, there are some restrictions on what you can sell on eBay. Here's what they are...

Although eBay is a great marketplace for buying and selling almost anything, the word 'almost' is important. There are some things you're not allowed to sell on eBay, and it has a long list of prohibited and restricted items, and if it spots that you're trying to sell anything that's against the rules, it'll remove your auction. It might not seem fair, but the rules have been created for a reason, and usually that reason is to keep eBay on the right side of the law and able to trade.

PROHIBITED ITEMS

The things on this list can't be sold on eBay under any circumstances:

- Adults only (i.e. pornographic material).
- Drugs and drug paraphernalia.
- Embargoed goods and prohibited countries.
- Firearms, weapons and knives.
- Government identification, licences and uniforms.
- Government, transit and postal-related items.
- Hazardous materials.
- Items encouraging illegal activity.
- Lock-picking devices.
- Mailing lists and personal information.
- Medicine and healthcare products policy.
- Offensive material.
- Police-related items.
- Prescription drugs.
- Prohibited services.
- Stolen property.

RESTRICTED ITEMS

Restricted items can sometimes be sold on eBay, but only under some conditions. These include:

- **Alcohol**
Beer and wine making kits are allowed, as are empty alcohol bottles, but actual booze can't be sold on eBay in the UK, due to legal age restrictions.
- **Animals and wildlife products**
Live pets can't be sold, but live bait and aquarium fish can. Also, hatching eggs can sometimes be sold, though actual birds can't. Products from

endangered animals (like fur or ivory) are also banned.

- **Artefacts, antiques, cultural items and grave-related items**

These are mostly restricted due to UK laws about items of cultural importance, so you can only sell any treasure you've found if you've reported it, and things like stalactites taken from sites of scientific interest are prohibited.

- **British titles**

Bizarrely, you can sell Lordships of the Manor, but you can't sell Duke, Duchess, Marquess, Marchioness, Earl, Countess, Viscount, Viscountess, Baron, Baroness, Knight or Baronet titles.

- **Catalogue sales**

If a catalogue is out of date and can no longer be ordered from, you can sell it on eBay. If it's selling things that are still available, though, you can't.

- **Charity or fundraising listings**

You can only set up charity listings if you do it properly, by setting up the listing through eBay's 'Advanced Sell' system, choosing a charity from the directory of charities listed on eBay. You can't say it's a charity listing otherwise.

- **Clothing, used**

You can't sell used underwear or used socks and shoes if the listing contains anything designed to be titillating. Other kinds of clothes are fine, as long as they're clean.

- **Contracts and tickets**

Some tickets specify that only the person named on them can use them – for example, you need ID to use a Glastonbury ticket, to prove you bought the ticket in the first place. Tickets without restrictions are okay.

- **Cosmetics, used**

Used makeup is a potential health hazard, so it can't be sold on eBay. Homemade cosmetics can, as long as they've been made in a way that complies with local laws.

- **Counterfeit currency and stamps**

This one's fairly obvious: you can't sell things that purport to be legal tender if they're not. You also can't sell novelty banknotes. Reproduction coins can be sold, if they're clearly marked.

- **Credit cards**

Cards that have expiry dates over ten years in the past can be sold as collectibles, but anything more recent is banned.

- **Digitally delivered goods**

This is a complicated one, but basically, you can't sell copies of things you don't own the copyright to. Therefore, you can't sell MP3s ripped from a CD you bought or digital movies you've copied from a DVD. Digital music, films, software, artwork or ebooks you created are okay, though.

- **Electrical and electronics equipment**

Surveillance devices are banned. Electrical items can be sold by business sellers under certain circumstances: they're required to take back and dispose of old electronic items, under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations.

- **Food**

Food needs to have a use-by date clearly marked on it – and it has to be sold before that date. Sellers must also explain how they'll get perishable items to buyers in time. Food claiming to have medicinal benefits is prohibited.

- **Franking machines**

Only sellers authorised by Royal Mail can sell franking machines, which is understandable, because otherwise they'd just be selling a licence to print postage without paying for it.

- **Gaming (slot/fruit) machines**

Machines that are broken or don't offer prizes are allowed, but otherwise all sales of gambling machines must be licensed by the Gambling Commission.

- **Human parts and remains**

You can't sell bits of yourself (or anyone else, for that matter) on eBay, including organs that have been removed, vials of blood, sperm or eggs. The only exception is that items that contain hair, like lockets, are allowed.

- **Manufacturers' vouchers**

There are limits on how many coupons you can sell: up to £100 or 25 individual coupons, per month.

- **Plants and seeds**

Which plants and seeds can be sold on eBay is dictated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the UK.

- **Promotional items**

Promotional copies of music or movies are generally supplied to reviewers ahead of release, but the copyright owners could claim it's an infringement of their rights to sell these on.

- **Property**

Because property law is so complex, if you sell property on eBay, it only counts as a non-binding auction, and you'll have to sort out all the actual details afterwards.



▲ Ghosts are another thing you can't sell on eBay

- **Recalled items**

If the recalled item isn't dangerous or illegal, you can sell it; otherwise, you can't.

- **Stocks and other securities**

Stocks are handled by the Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority in the UK, so eBay won't get involved. You can sell some other business-related objects, though.

- **Tobacco**

Like booze, there are legal restrictions on tobacco, so you can't sell it on eBay. Packaging and related items can be sold as collectibles, though.

- **Travel**

Again, there are laws about travel and holiday packages, so you'll need to make sure your listing adheres to those.

- **Unlocking software**

Anything that enables or encourages illegal activity is banned.

WHAT EBAY DOES ABOUT RULE BREAKING

eBay regularly searches for prohibited and restricted items to check that nothing illicit is being sold, but with so many sales taking place, it's no surprise that not everything is always caught. Therefore, eBay encourages users to check up on one another: if you see something that breaches eBay's rules, you can click the 'Report Item' link to let eBay know about it.

eBay will then email the seller (and the buyer, if applicable) to let them know that the item breaches its policies, and it will remove the listing. If a seller has a history of breaking the rules, eBay may also shut down their account completely.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

Getting The Right Picture

A good picture is basically essential to any good eBay auction. It could be the difference between scrolling past and buying

The quality of your eBay listing and how you handle enquiries and fulfil orders builds confidence among your buyers – confidence in you. The photos that accompany your listings build up buyers' confidence in the item you're hoping to sell.

Great images can come out of inexpensive cameras. As long as you stick to a few rules, time spent on photos will pay off in increased sales. People may be put off by wordy or scant descriptions. If you're not the eBay poet you'd like to be, let your pictures speak for you instead.

BUYER FOCUS

Always keep your prospective buyers in mind as you snap your shots. Make sure they're properly lit from all sides so detail isn't being hidden in shadow, and avoid harsh shadows on or around the item. Flash photography usually isn't a good idea, and glare can be a problem on reflective surfaces, so use ambient light when possible. Shoot outdoors if possible, but in winter you can get nice photos by shooting indoors with lamps.

If the scale of an item is hard to judge, it's a good idea to put a recognisable object next to it. Coins are often used beside small items, and rulers and yardsticks can be placed with large items. Text descriptions of size are hard to visualise, and international buyers may not want to do conversions. Even if you think it spoils your photos, these types of visual aids are always appreciated.

IMAGE BASICS

Buyers want to identify merchandise at a glance. Remember, it takes them far less time to click away from your page than to stop and find their glasses, so make your images stand out. Arrange and focus each shot so the item fills the available space or crop it later, leaving a border of roughly 10% around the item.

Use the macro setting, if your camera has one, for very small items or close-ups of details in larger pieces, but be sure to use it properly. Choose high-contrast, solid, seamless, clutter-free backgrounds. Use light-coloured backgrounds for dark items, and darker shades for light items.

Include as much detail in each photo as possible, especially if there's a problem. Buyers need to know if an item is cracked, stained, torn or chipped. Sellers who post a zoomed image of a small flaw often get feedback comments of 'better than expected', when the item with its petite imperfection arrives. Those who try to hide or disguise damage in photos risk receiving negative feedback from buyers, which will reduce confidence from future potential buyers.

Be considerate of buyers' time and bandwidth. If your photos are slow to load, they'll move on. File sizes should be the smallest achievable without sacrificing quality. Keep in mind there are people who still have computer display desktop settings of 800 x 600 pixels, which is why eBay recommends dimensions of 400 pixels along the longest edge of your image.

DID YOU KNOW?

When the company went public, eBay's employees – all 30 of them, at the time – did the conga around the office in celebration. As shareholders, they'd all become very rich as a result of the flotation. We'd dance to that too.



▲ By holding this coin in their hand, this seller gives you an instant idea of its size. Plus it's nicely in focus so you can see all the details



▲ This is a fairly basic white shirt, but by displaying it on a mannequin and adding some quirky lighting, this seller makes it look appealing



▲ You can use stock imagery if you're selling a new item, but make sure it really is in mint condition or you'll have a very unhappy buyer

REAL SELLERS' PICTURES

While you're learning to improve your photos, don't be tempted to copy and paste images from other sellers. Not only will buyers notice, but you could lose your eBay account and face legal action.

If you're worried that your own pictures might be stolen and used by other sellers, you can protect them by adding a watermark. eBay makes this easy: its image uploading tool includes the option of superimposing your User ID or a camera icon over your images.

Alternatively, you can use separate imaging editing software to customise your watermark. If you do opt for this method, try to place your mark where it's either impossible or too much trouble to remove, being sure not to obscure an important feature of your item. If it's



▲ Watermarking your image stops other sellers passing off your items as their own

stolen and altered, it'll be obvious which photo is the original and which was tampered with.

If you're reselling new goods, though, you can get often get away with using stock photos. Manufacturers and wholesalers often have professional, free product shots available through their sites or on request.

OBJECT LESSONS

If you're not sure whether your photos are good enough, take a look at what other people selling similar items are doing. How do they make clothes look good, and what kind of detail do they include? See which kinds of photos make you want to click on an auction, and which you just scroll straight past. Make your photos more like the former than the latter.

WEBSITE REVIEW

POWER SELLERS UNITE

www.powersellersunite.com



★★★★☆

From its origins as a protest site against changes eBay introduced almost ten years ago, Power Sellers Unite has developed into something far more substantial. It's a terrific mix of news, discussion and tools, with the main attraction being the active discussion forums.

Willing to cast its net wider than just eBay, it's a treasure trove of experience and information, with a wealth of material dating back to 2005 for you to discover. Constantly up to date and easier to make your way around, Power Sellers Unite has an American focus, but there's no shortage of help for British eBayers.

Top Photo Tips

Here are some extra things worth bearing in mind when you're sorting out photos for your listings:

- Always take more photos than you think you'll need. Pictures that look okay on the tiny screen on your camera might not look so good on your computer screen and vice versa. Try a few different angles and see what looks best.
- Even if you don't post all your photos, they're not necessarily wasted. If a prospective buyer gets in touch wanting to see more images, you can always email them the ones you didn't post. It might help make up their minds.
- Keep the photos until after you've sold the item and received feedback. If your item gets lost in the post or the buyer claims it arrived damaged or dirty, you'll have your photos to fall back on.
- Think about putting your item in context. If it's an item of clothing, you could include a photo of someone wearing it. If you're selling an ornament, take a photo of it looking beautiful on a clean and tidy shelf or bookcase.
- Check what's in the background of your photos. You wouldn't want to accidentally share the contents of your laundry basket with the internet, so try to make sure your item always has a clean and non-distracting background.
- Check for reflections too! At least one person has been caught out when taking photos in the nude – not realising that there was a mirror or reflective pane of glass caught in the photo, too. You don't want to become a living cautionary tale.
- Above all, do your best to make sure your photos give an accurate and appealing impression of the thing you're selling. You should never try to hide an item's flaws in a photo, but there's always nothing wrong with taking photos that show something at its best.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

How To Post Your Items

Once you've sold an item on eBay, you need to actually deliver it. Thankfully, there are plenty of options...

Even before you sell something on eBay, you'll need to know roughly how much it's going to cost you to post it. If you set your postage and packing charges too low, you'll end up eating into your own profits; set them too high and your buyers might get annoyed when their package arrives and they see how much it really cost. And if your packaging isn't up to scratch, items might end up getting damaged before they're delivered, and that's another way to make your customers angry. Getting the postage and packaging right is one of the key parts of being a successful eBay seller, so it's worth taking a little bit of time to think about it ahead of time.

PACK IT UP

The first thing to sort out is how you're going to package your item. That obviously depends on what it is: if it's something like a DVD or a book, you can just stick it in an appropriately sized Jiffy bag and drop it in a post box, but anything bigger, more awkwardly shaped or fragile will need more care and attention. The more valuable the item, the more securely you'll want to package it up, because when you're selling something online, you're responsible for the item until it's safely delivered to the buyer. If it gets lost or damaged in transit, it'll be up to you to make recompense.

Most supermarkets and local shops carry envelopes and boxes designed to be sent through the post, but the obvious place to go for supplies is your local Post Office. A sturdy box stuffed with bubble wrap or packing paper should keep most things safe and secure until they reach their destination. Make sure you close your box or envelope securely too; use parcel tape if necessary.

PRICE IT UP

Once you know how your item will be packaged, you can work out how much it'll cost to post, based on the size and weight of the package. If you're planning on selling a lot of stuff on eBay and you don't already own a set of weighing scales, it might be worth investing in some!

Most things will be sent through Royal Mail, and the Post Office's website has a handy postage calculator that you can use to work out charges.

Remember, international shipping will be considerably more expensive, so if you're offering to sell items to international buyers, you'll need to figure out how much you'll charge them.

In some cases, you might choose to use a courier other than Royal Mail, like Hermes or Collect+. If so, check out the website of the courier of your choice to get a postage estimate.

Depending on what you're selling, you might also want to think about paying for a recorded delivery or extra postal insurance. If you've let Royal Mail know that your item is fragile or valuable, paid for extra services and got proof of postage, then you'll be able to make a claim should something happen to it before it's delivered. Royal Mail is pretty reliable (stats show there's one complaint per 13,000 items sent, which is a very low failure rate), but it's better to be safe than sorry.

Remember to factor in the cost of packaging to your postage rates. Jiffy bags and bubble wrap can get expensive if you need to buy a lot of them!

PAYING POSTAGE

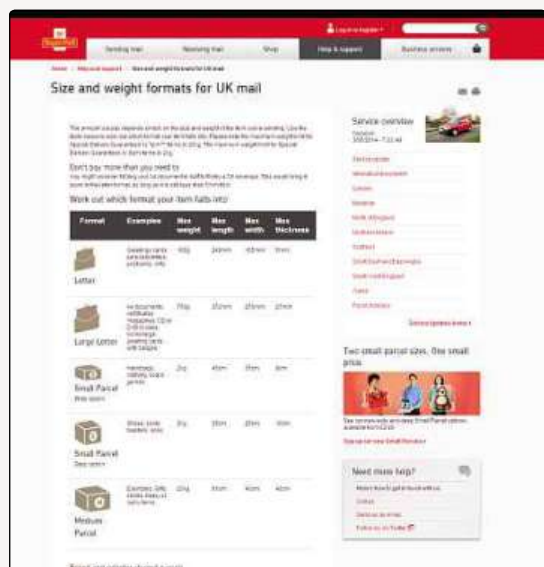
Once you've actually sold your items, you'll need to buy postage and then send them on their way. Unless you've got a massive stash of stamps at home, though, you might assume there's a visit to the Post Office and a long wait in the queue in your future. However, that's not necessarily the case. You can buy and print postage via the Royal



▲ If you don't want to use Royal Mail, there are other courier services available

DID YOU KNOW?

PowerSellers are described by the auction house as "pillars of the eBay community", yet the BBC's Watchdog programme managed to buy a number of fake items from them. These included Prada shoes, Christian Dior bags and Adidas trainers.



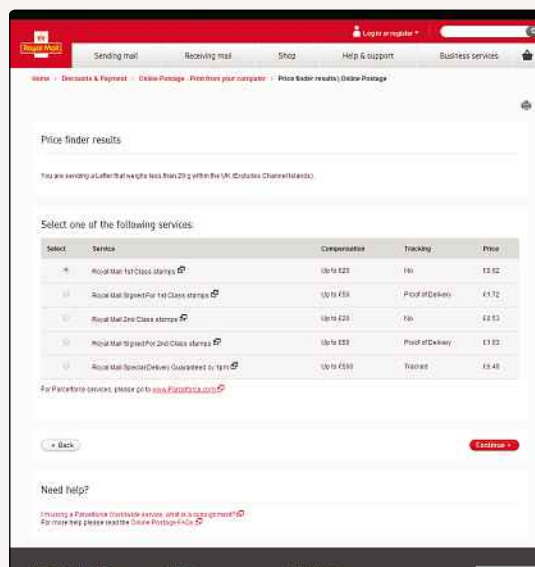
▲ Postage costs depend on the size and weight of your parcel. Don't get caught out!

Mail website (www.royalmail.com). Under 'Sending Mail' there's a section on 'Online Postage', where you can use a simple wizard to print labels for your packages.

You don't necessarily have to use labels either; you can choose to print postage on envelopes or on standard paper, in a variety of different sizes to fit the parcel you're sending. When it's printed, you can just cut round it and stick the paper label to your package with sticky tape. Make sure it's well secured, though; you don't want it falling off in transit!

There are plenty of options available through online postage, including choosing between first and second class post or adding tracking or additional insurance. Watch out, though: some of those options mean you'll need to go to the Post Office to actually send your item, even if you print the postage online. If you're sending something overseas, you might also need to go the Post Office to fill out a customs form, so not all transactions will be totally straightforward, but the vast majority of things you'll send will probably be fine to print online.

It's all relatively simple to use, with only one quirk: you can't pay for the exact amount of postage you're buying online. Instead, you have to transfer money into an online Royal Mail account and then use that to pay for the stamps you actually need. The smallest amount you can transfer into that account is £3.50, which might be more than your package will cost to send. Don't worry, though, the money doesn't expire, and the balance can be used against future online postage purchases when you sell something else.



▲ Using Royal Mail's online postage service, you can choose how to send your package

If you're planning to use Royal Mail or ParcelForce, you can use eBay's Postage Centre to create and print your labels. That way, the buyer's delivery information will be automatically set up for you, and you can use your PayPal account to pay for the postage.

Remember that unlike stamps, postage bought online has an expiry date – usually the end of the day following the day it was purchased. That means you have a limited window to get your package in the post box (or dropped off at the Post Office) before the label expires. If that happens, you can apply for a refund, but it's best to just make sure you can post your packages on the day that you're creating the label and save yourself the hassle.

RESTRICTED ITEMS

Something else you should be aware of when sending items through the post is that Royal Mail won't carry everything, and some items have restrictions. Aerosol cans, for instance, must be well protected, and you'll need to make sure your name and address are on the parcel. Lithium batteries have to be removed from any devices and wrapped securely.

Thanks to a change in the rules in July 2013, cosmetics like nail varnish and perfume that were previously banned from being sent through the post are now allowed, although there's a cap on how many bottles can be included in each package and how much the total volume of the product can be. Again, sellers need to make sure their name and address is provided on the outside of the package. A full and comprehensive list of everything that's restricted is available from the Royal Mail website.

WEBSITE REVIEW

LASTMINUTE AUCTION

lastminute-auction.com/uk/



★★★★★

A simple idea, very well executed. Instead of hunting through the entire eBay catalogue for deals, what LastMinute Auction does is looks up all listings ending within the next hour, whose price is still under £1.

Appreciating there are some items that appear on the list for fairly obvious reasons (there's usually a lot of cheap jewellery when we go visiting), nonetheless its search results make for interesting reading. Plus you can break them down by category, which helps. It's such a simple idea, so well executed that it's one of the best resources for buyers on the web.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

Why Ratings And Feedback Matter

The rating system built into the eBay service is an important barometer of how trustworthy a trader is. Here's why...

Quick reality check: when you use eBay, you're trading with a complete stranger. Whether selling or buying, it's absolutely essential to get some measure of how reliable the other eBay member is. In short, will the goods/money arrive? This is why trading history is part of your eBay profile; it's used to determine whether or not to do business with you.

This might be something of a catch-22 situation if everyone required their buyer or seller to be experienced before trading, since it would not be possible to accumulate a rating without first having a good trading history. However, in practice, sellers of items under £100 are likely to accept business from almost anyone, allowing rookie users to build up their score. It's probably a good idea to start out buying smaller things on eBay to get the hang of it before taking the plunge and going for more expensive items.

HOW IT WORKS

Generally speaking, feedback – and thus, a rating – is given when a transaction is complete, the money has

been cleared, the goods are delivered and both sides are happy. If the buyer is paying through PayPal, the seller might give them their feedback straight away, since there's very little else required of the buyer, and receiving a thank you comment can encourage the buyer to reply in kind.

If something goes wrong with the transaction, then the feedback system is one way of informing other eBay users about the reality of dealing with this particular user. It should be pointed out that leaving negative feedback is not the first course of action to take if there's a problem. It's best for everyone to resolve matters with a positive attitude, rather than by resorting to 'revenge feedback'. Recent changes to the feedback system also include a three-day delay before you can give non-positive feedback, which can be time enough to cool off and maybe talk it over some more.

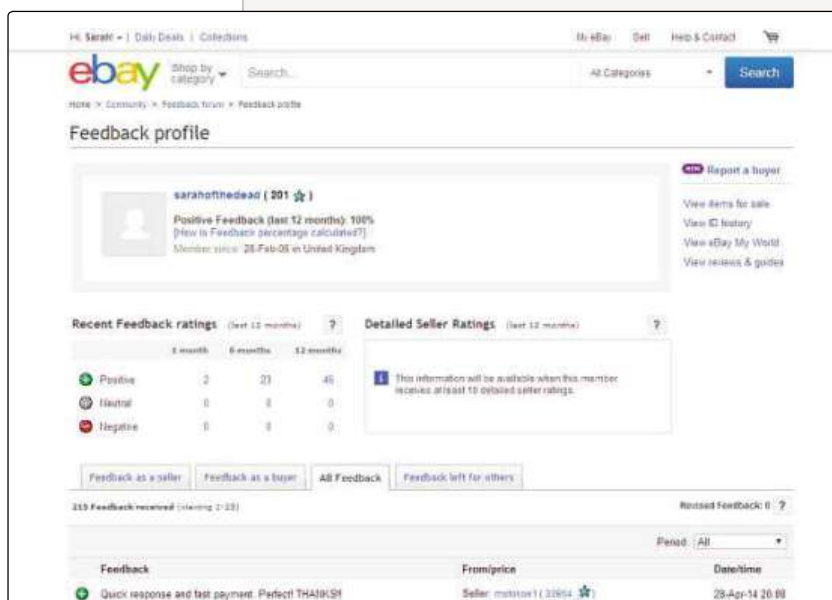
Feedback is an important part of the pseudo-gaming aspect of eBay. It's no coincidence that eBay describes a successful purchase as a 'winning bid' and awards a score to its members. Winning auctions and good feedback ratings are an important part of the eBay experience; it keeps people using the system and also provides a threat against misusing the service.

RATINGS

A feedback rating is composed of a choice of 'positive', 'negative' or 'neutral', along with a comment on the transaction. Generally speaking, a transaction should end with a positive result. Only very poorly managed transactions should be classed as neutral, and only in cases where there has been a complete failure, coupled with some sort of material loss on one side or another, should the transaction be rated as negative. Negative basically describes the other party as totally impossible to work with.

The comment in the feedback usually falls into one of two categories. It is either a stock 'thank you', which many people adorn with their own brand of hyperbole or it's a description of what went wrong or, indeed, right with the transaction.

It's important, on the rare occasions where you need to deliver negative feedback, to make it



▲ Feedback profiles are central to the workings of eBay

absolutely clear why you're doing it. For example, you might write "The seller sent me three poor excuses and then stopped replying to emails," which would clearly explain why no other person should deal with them. Conversely, writing "This guy is a moron and needs help!", while possibly cathartic, is missing the point somewhat.

Some people seem to use the opportunity of giving feedback to wax lyrical about how much they enjoy using eBay. With some sellers, this can almost be an incentive to buy further items, just to see what they will write next.

THE RATING NUMBER

The ratings are compiled into a single 'score'. For every positive rating you get, your score is increased by one. For every negative rating, the score is reduced by one. Neutral, predictably, has no effect. However, an extra detail is that your score cannot be affected by more than a total of one by any individual eBay user in a given week. So, if you sold one hundred items to the same user and received all positive feedback, your feedback rating will still be one. Conversely, if you sold one item per week for a year to the same person and received positive feedback, you would score 52. To make things more complex, if the same user, in the same week, gives a variety of positive and negative ratings to the same seller, the overall positive or negative effect on that seller's feedback score will be determined by the balance of different ratings – a bit like the 'swing-ometer' showing how election results affect the political parties.

When reading a user's rating, do not just rely on the points total; there's also a description of the overall total percentage of positive feedback. A new feature of eBay is also the DSR (Detailed Seller Rating), which shows a star-based scoring system in terms of item description, communication, delivery time and how reasonable the postage charges were.

eBay sellers who trade in high volume and continue to receive a high percentage of positive feedback are designated as PowerSellers. This is a hard rating to achieve, but the confidence a buyer can feel with a PowerSeller is often reflected in increased sales. In addition, once you're a PowerSeller, it's harder for a buyer to leave you negative feedback.

IDEAL FEEDBACK RATINGS FOR BUYERS

As a buyer, if you have a choice of sellers you should favour one with a long trading history and a large number and high percentage of positive feedback ratings. Ideally, you should find no negative feedback for your seller. If there has been negative feedback, it would be best if that transaction happened a while ago (you can see a breakdown of ratings received in the last one, six and 12 months).

Feedback Icons

You'll notice an icon next to an eBay User ID. This represents how good that user's trading history has been. This table shows what they all mean.

Number of points	Icon
10 – 49	Yellow star ★
50 – 99	Blue star ★
100 – 499	Turquoise star ★
500 – 999	Purple star ★
1,000 – 4,999	Red star ★
5,000 – 9,999	Green star ★
10,000 – 24,999	Yellow shooting star ★
25,000 – 49,999	Turquoise shooting star ★
50,000 – 99,999	Purple shooting star ★
100,000 – 499,000	Red shooting star ★
500,000 – 999,999	Green shooting star ★
Over 1,000,000	Silver shooting star ★

You should also read the last few feedback descriptions, as they appear on the ticker on the profile page, to see what else buyers have to say about dealing with the seller. The Detailed Seller Ratings should be an honest appraisal of the seller, because they're left anonymously.

Look for comments and DSRs that describe items arriving rapidly and in excellent condition. If there has been any negative feedback, it might be worth trying to find out exactly what happened. It's possible that the cause of the negative rating was a particularly unreasonable buyer, and the seller's reply to the feedback, explaining their side of things, may give you a more balanced view of what happened and also how that seller treats their buyers.

Overall, though, it's in the interest of a seller to make sure that they get a satisfactory rating of their conduct on eBay. Feedback ratings are the primary way that a prospective trading partner gets to decide whether you look reliable, so every negative rating counts heavily.

RECEIVING NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Having described the importance of a clean record on eBay, it's still almost inevitable that a transaction will go wrong at some point, especially if you're dealing with countless members of the general public, not all of whom know how to use eBay properly. Should you receive negative feedback, there are two possible things you can do to deal with it.

First and foremost, you should respond. Your response will be listed alongside the complaint, which

WEBSITE REVIEW

QUIDCO

www.quidco.com

★★★★★



If you're regularly buying on eBay, then it's worth being a member of Quidco. This is a service that basically gives you a small percentage of cashback on everything you buy. Quidco pays you back 40% of eBay's take on any auction, which actually sounds more impressive than it is and varies by category. Say you bought something for £500. eBay takes around £40 of that in fees. You'd therefore get £16 eventually paid into your bank account by Quidco.

There's no harm in using the Quidco service, short of it tracking what you buy, and it's an easy way to save yourself cash.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

SNOW

Colorado resident Mary Walker opened an eBay auction for the snow she'd cleared off her drive. Bidding started at \$0.99. "I figured eBay has ghosts and all sorts of weird stuff, so why not snow?" she said.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING



◀ In the majority of cases, you'll be leaving positive feedback. Only in the worst possible scenario would you consider leaving negative feedback

allows you to give a more balanced view of what happened. It's not necessary to give your opinion of the other person involved. You need to portray yourself as a reasonable person to trade with.

If necessary, you may be able to appeal to eBay to have the feedback removed. It has very strict rules governing the removal of feedback and will only do so if there's a breach of those rules. See pages.ebay.co.uk/help/policies/inappropriate-feedback-comments.html for the exact terms of feedback removal. In a nutshell, eBay will remove abusive or libelous feedback, along with feedback resulting from clearly malicious behaviour – like winning an auction purely for the chance to give negative feedback, rather than to buy the item.

AVOIDING NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Prevention is the best cure. Even with the best will in the world, things can go wrong during the course of a transaction. If you keep the other party informed every step of the way, they're less likely to consider your service to be poor. This is not a recommendation to spam them with hourly updates (once every two hours is more than enough). However, if there are going to be delays, it's a good idea to keep the other person informed as you work through the problem.

Generally speaking, people are quite reasonable and respond well to being kept informed, even if it's bad news you're delivering. When you've completed your side of the transaction, contact the other person to make sure that they're happy and to offer assistance if they require it.

Leaving negative feedback is really a last resort for dealing with problems. If you're proactive, friendly and helpful throughout your dealings with other eBay users, the chances are that they'll give you a positive feedback rating, even if there were problems.

TIT FOR TAT

Amid some controversy, eBay changed its feedback system in 2008. Originally, the idea of allowing people to give mutual feedback made eBay seem like a self-policing community. However, the ability for a seller to reward a disgruntled customer with negative feedback, alongside the facility to mutually withdraw feedback, had resulted in a couple of phenomena. Firstly, there was a tit-for-tat effect when a buyer gave a negative rating and the seller immediately responded in kind. This discouraged some buyers from being honest, lest they get smeared in the process.

Secondly, the fact that a rating could be withdrawn had the possible effect of encouraging some people to bully their reviewer into agreeing to withdraw the feedback. One aspect of dealing with the general public over the internet is that there are some crazies out there, and they may have nothing better to do with their time than annoy you on eBay.

The changes, which include preventing sellers from giving buyers negative feedback and the new anonymous Detailed Seller Ratings, are a big step forward. They recognise that the person risking the most on eBay is the buyer. Ultimately, it's the buyer who sends the funds and risks receiving nothing or something they didn't bargain for.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Although there's much to say on the subject of dealing with negative feedback, it's worth remembering that part of being a good eBay trader is the accumulation of positive feedback from different eBay users in order to aggregate a good overall score. A better score will enable you to deal with more eBay users.

Good communication and prompt payment or delivery are the main sources of positive eBay feedback. If in your communication or item description

you under-promise, and then, in reality, over-deliver (for example, claiming you deliver in a week, but you actually turn around delivery in three days), you will make people happy. If, in addition, you contact the other eBay user on completion of the transaction and remind them to leave you feedback, having given them a positive feedback score, then you are more than likely to receive positive feedback in kind. Success on eBay can be as much about good social skills as good business skills.

WHEN TRANSACTIONS GO BAD

Overall, trading on eBay is about as safe as buying something from a stall at your local market. eBay provides a range of services to help you resolve disputes, and the vast majority of transactions go by without a hitch. However, when eBay transactions go wrong, they can do so spectacularly. The fact that most items are bought by mail order is a significant complicating factor, as is the fact that many people on eBay are enthusiastic amateurs, rather than professional businesspeople.

TAKING THE RISK

Although there are risks associated with eBay transactions, and although you may prefer to reduce those risks by dealing only with PowerSellers or those eBay users with huge feedback ratings, it's best for the eBay community as a whole to give people the benefit of the doubt. There are ways of dealing with failed transactions and, assuming that the other person is in the UK, normal trading laws govern the sale. Although some eBay users are unreliable, it's better to play the game rather than miss out on good deals 'just in case'.

Conversely, when buying something from an eBay user with a low feedback rating, you should consider the value of the transaction. Could you afford to lose this money? Although you might, ultimately, be able to



▲ If your item arrives looking like this, negative feedback might be in order, but try to resolve the situation amicably first

recover the funds or replace a faulty item bought at that price, would it be worth the hassle?

Generally speaking, the average eBay user should expect to have some sort of problem with an eBay transaction around 5% of the time, usually with low-value items where the seller isn't making enough of a profit to be able to do much to rectify any problems that occur.

NOT RECEIVING THE GOODS

Sometimes eBay items do not arrive. In this situation, the first thing to do is check that the seller has received the funds and ask them for the date when the item was sent. If the seller has proof of mailing, then they should be able to chase the matter up with the Post Office or courier. If they've sent the item via special delivery, it's possible to track the item through the post office's system.

In order to bring costs down, many items are sent via normal mail. This makes them difficult to track, and they may end up permanently lost in the post. Given that many eBay sellers are selling unique items, possibly from their own personal house clearance, the chances of getting a replacement for that exact item are low.

WEBSITE REVIEW

THE PAYPAL BLOG

www.paypal.co.uk/blog

★★★★☆



An official blog from PayPal, this site inevitably has any controversial corners cut off it. On the other hand, though, there is some interesting material and research that's sometimes presented. It's not going to present you with a magic wand for boosting sales, nor will it get you past the inevitable frustrations that many suffer with the PayPal service. Nevertheless, it's well presented, just a little corporate, but worth checking in on every now and then.

A Tale Of Two Problems

In one eBay transaction, a particular seller had specified that they would only deal with damaged goods if the buyer paid postal insurance. The item in question, a CD, was shipped without its jewel case in a padded envelope. It arrived at the buyer's snapped in two. The buyer complained and was told that nothing could be done. This resulted in a heated email exchange, with various insults traded and negative feedback. All that fuss over a £5 CD.

In a different eBay transaction, the seller had specified a refund or replacement on computer

hard disk sales. One of the hard disks, retailing for about £40, was found to be faulty, so it was duly returned and a replacement was received a day or so later. This too was found to be faulty. The seller again agreed to replace it and sent another through. This third disk was also faulty. The buyer complained again to the seller, who offered a refund, concerned that perhaps something about the buyer's usage of the disks was the problem. Eventually, the seller was persuaded to send another disk, which worked perfectly. Positive feedback all around. Cooperation really works.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

If you're concerned about the possibility of the item being lost in the mail, ask whether the seller is prepared to add postal insurance to their delivery service, which should offer some guarantee of arrival or a refund if the item is lost.

BUYER COMPLAINING OF NON-RECEIPT

When considering how a seller might respond to your complaint about non-receipt of an item, think how you would react if one of your buyers contacted you, claiming they haven't received the goods. On one hand, it's quite possible that the postal system has failed or that you incorrectly addressed the package. On the other hand, there are going to be some people who receive their items perfectly and then contact you complaining of non-receipt in an attempt to get a refund on top of the goods.

You have to take the buyer's claims at face value. Therefore, it's recommended that for any item of value, you use Royal Mail's special delivery service or an equivalent (even getting a simple certificate of posting for low-value items). Postal or courier tracking on an item, and the insurance to replace it if it's lost, is a good way to resolve any complaints. For items worth more money than you can afford to lose, consider tracking and insurance to be an absolute must.

RECEIVING DAMAGED GOODS

If an item arrives damaged or faulty, it's easier to convince a seller that there's a problem. You can take digital photographs or even return the item to them. It's important that you're fully aware of the seller's returns policy before you agree to bid on the item. Most sellers

will expect you to pay for the return postage. Some sellers may stipulate that they will only deal with damaged items in situations where postal insurance has been bought. In any case, the first thing to do is contact the seller, explain the problem and ask them what they can do.

NOT RECEIVING PAYMENT

It's best not to send an item to your buyer until their payment has already cleared. Receiving a cheque is all very well, but cheques can easily bounce. PayPal, despite charging a transaction fee for sellers, is an instant method of payment and it also simplifies things greatly.

If you haven't received any form of payment, you can prompt the other user with an eBay invoice, for which there's a link in the email confirming the sale. After that, you can contact them directly, perhaps offering them an alternative means of payment (PayPal, cheque, money order, bank transfer and so on).

If you've sent the item out before cleared payment or if a cheque bounces, then you're in a very weak negotiating position. Don't do this; it's really not worth the stress. If you've sent the item on trust and have received no payment, then you can send an invoice to the buyer's delivery address and could, ultimately, proceed to the small claims court. This is much better avoided by withholding the item until cleared funds are received. The overwhelming majority of buyers will have no problem with you doing so. If a buyer is putting pressure on you to deliver before you receive the cheque, consider it a warning sign; there's seldom a good reason for this sort of behaviour.

NEGOTIATING WITH THE OTHER PERSON

eBay users are, in general, reasonable people who are worried about their feedback rating. Putting aside all the things that can go wrong, people generally go onto eBay to trade honestly, rather than con each other. Wherever there has been a problem, the best step to take first is to contact the other user and discuss it. You shouldn't storm in with threats about negative feedback, because although it means something, it's also a fairly limited 'punishment'. If you're polite and reasonable with the other person, there's a high chance you'll be able to come to an agreement over how to solve the problems blighting a transaction.

EBAY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If negotiation fails, then eBay has a Dispute Console. You can use this to ask eBay to step in to help resolve the problem. eBay will not refund your money. Indeed, the worst eBay can do to a buyer or seller is suspend their account until they have either resolved the problem or, more likely, set up a new account in a different name and continued trading regardless.

The screenshot shows an eBay message interface. At the top, a yellow banner reads "Your question from an eBay member". Below this, a message from "Dear sarahothedead," is shown, with a "Reply in your email or through My Messages" button and a "Respond Now" button. The message content says: "Thanks for your purchase and quick payment. I've posted your item off this morning and you will be receiving it very soon. Thanks again." Below this, a message from "brodie_angel" is shown, with a "Respond Now" button. The message content says: "THE SIZE OF WATERMELONS Paul Rudd lone Skye Marissa Ribisi Venice Beach Comedy". Below this, a "Marketplace safety tip" is shown, with a list of tips: "Keep your money safe - never pay for items with cash or instant money transfer services, such as Western Union or MoneyGram. In the past, sellers have exploited these payment methods in order to defraud buyers, so eBay has banned them from the site.", "Received a Second Chance Offer email? Double check that it's genuine. Second Chance Offer emails come directly from eBay and are shown in Messages.", "Trade safely. Beware of anyone who contacts you about buying or selling outside of eBay. When you trade outside eBay, you're not able to leave feedback or take advantage of our protection programmes and resolution tools. Report an inappropriate email.", and "eBay helps guard your privacy and online safety when you use our messaging tools. If you and the member you're contacting haven't bought or each other recently, our tools may make both of your email addresses anonymous." At the bottom, an email reference ID is shown: "Email reference ID: [9a02-76dy7pme26LJ02202025a220e4777b27176210caca7eR]".

▲ You can send messages to the other party if there's a problem with your order



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CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTORY SELLING

In some cases, the threat of an account suspension or even the more official nature of disputes taken up through eBay's Dispute Console, will break a stalemate in negotiations, so it's worth following this course of action if you can't resolve things amicably directly with the other person.

PAYPAL PROTECTION

PayPal was acquired by eBay in order to provide financial services for its customers. Along with the ability to manage credit cards and virtual funds in multiple currencies, protecting those vital personal details, rather than revealing them to the other person, PayPal also provides insurance on every purchase you make. This insurance will cover you up to 100% of the value of an item that never arrives or arrives but proves to be significantly different from the item description. Given that this is an insurance policy, however, PayPal will be as keen to follow the small print of the original item description as the seller was.

It is certainly confidence inspiring to think that if an expensive item doesn't arrive, there's the possibility of PayPal refunding its worth. PayPal's service extends to sellers as well, offering insurance against chargebacks. A chargeback is when someone asks their credit card company to reverse a transaction for some reason. If this were to happen against an eBay sale you were involved with, you'd be obliged to return the funds. However, PayPal insures you against this.

Overall, using PayPal is a pretty good way to protect your interests on eBay, even though its disputes team and complaints process can be quite hard work.

CREDIT CARD PROTECTION

Many credit cards offer protection against fraudulent transactions. If you've bought something and paid by credit card, and this includes your credit card being debited by PayPal for an auction item, you can contact your credit card company for its assistance in reversing a transaction or at least putting pressure on the merchant to resolve the matter. At the very least, it may put a hold on the transaction so you neither have to pay it off nor pay any interest on it until the matter is resolved.

THE LAW

If you've paid for services and they haven't been provided or if the items sent to you are counterfeit or unfit for purpose, then you have the support of UK law. This is more complicated when dealing with overseas eBay users, however. Within the UK, though, you can contact your lawyer, Citizen's Advice Bureau, local Trading Standards office or even the police, in order to get help dealing with your problem.

In particular, if you've been provided with counterfeit goods, your complaint to the authorities

Caveat Emptor

The eBay item description will show you what you might be getting should you choose to bid. It can be an excellent sales pitch. However, it also represents a contract between the seller and buyer. Read the description in its entirety and do not bid if you're uncertain about exactly what is being sold. Ask questions of the seller before bidding if you're still not sure. A small phrase in the description might well be used retrospectively to justify why the item turns out to be something other than expected. Likewise, a few words in the seller's returns policy might make it difficult to get any after-sales service if something goes wrong.

Although you have statutory rights dealing with traders in the UK, bear in mind that not all eBay traders are based in the UK (this may be in the small print), and it may simply not be worth your while to pursue a claim.

The 'Resolved' Dispute

A particular eBay purchase of some apparently end-of-line DVDs with boxes missing resulted in the delivery of some illegal DVD copies. The buyer contacted the Resolution Center. The Resolution Center went through its procedure until the seller terminated their eBay account.

At this point, the dispute was marked as resolved. There was nothing further that eBay would do. The buyer could have taken the matter further with external agencies, including FACT (the Federation Against Copyright Theft), but seemingly thought it not worth the effort for the few pounds that the item cost.

may help them to deal with an organised counterfeiting group.

THE REALITY

Thankfully, trading on eBay seldom results in a complaint, claim or lawsuit. The reason it works as well as it does is that there are huge numbers of honest people on it. Likewise, selling on eBay is relatively straightforward, especially if you have the right attitude.

You need to recognise the difference between an eBay PowerSeller, from whom you might expect the same guarantee of service as many dedicated online stores (and many PowerSellers have their own sites outside of eBay as well) and an individual trader, who won't be selling on eBay full time so might need longer to complete the transaction and is less able to provide after-sales support. eBay is at its best when buyers and sellers work together to make transactions succeed.

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Ten eBay Con Tricks To Watch Out For

What are the most common tricks used by the less scrupulous eBayers, and how can you go about protecting yourself?

1 PHOTOS OR HOW-TO GUIDES

A quick look at the description suggests that you will be buying the item in the picture. Watch out for the small print, though. People commonly sell a picture of or a document about an item, rather than the item itself. The listing may have the same title as others for that item, perhaps with a clone of the item description used in the other auctions. Copy-cat item descriptions do not bode well for the seller.

Some listings suggest you can buy something that will help you get the item you want cheaply. Perhaps they're offering a 'trade secrets' book or CD, which claims to tell you how to get the item at a heavily discounted price – that's after first forking out for the guide, which in turn may simply state something completely obvious.

2 COUNTERFEIT GOODS

Although eBay is proactive about removing fake items from its listings, there's good business in the quick sale of fake designer items, even at a fraction of their high-street price. When buying branded goods, be sure to identify the seller and read their feedback carefully. There are also legal clones of popular items. Beware of descriptions with 'like' in them. The item may well be similar to the real thing but may be a generic brand, not worth as much as you paid.

3 ILLEGAL IMPORTS

Because eBay is an international marketplace, you can deal with traders from anywhere in the world. It doesn't follow that listings on the UK site come from UK sellers only. If the item you're buying is usually subject to import duty, you should check that the seller is going to pay this tax. If they're not paying to export the item to the UK, it's possible that you'll end up having to pay duty before Customs & Excise will release the item. This is something that eBay will not protect against.



▲ That new chart album might not be such a good deal

4 PRE-BROKEN ITEMS

An old-fashioned auctioneering con is to sell items 'as seen'. This can be used by an unscrupulous seller as a way of selling items that are already broken. Alternatively, if the seller stipulates that they will not be held responsible for breakages during delivery, they could send an already broken item and claim it broke in transit. Watch out for small print in the item description and returns policy. Even an item that claims to be broken may not be much of a deal; the words 'ideal for spares or repair' may actually mean 'totally destroyed and ideal for the bin'.

5 CD-R VERSIONS

With several major retail sites selling brand new chart CDs at around £7, it's fair to say they can't be bought much more cheaply. Older albums may well come out cheaper, sold second-hand or from surplus stock. However, if you're buying a new album at too cheap a price, be cautious. Some people are happy to buy illegal copies of CDs or CD-Rs with MP3 versions of several albums on. These are an infringement of copyright, and no money goes to the artist.

6 MASSIVE STOCK NEW SHOP

A seller with little to no selling history and a huge stock of items might be a genuine person doing a life-laundry. Alternatively, they may be trying to close a large number of bogus deals before being discovered. A bogus seller is unlikely to have as random an assortment of different items as a genuine first-timer with a bunch of their possessions to sell.

7 FAKE MEMORABILIA

Buying memorabilia is always a risky business. How can you be sure that this really is the towel that Jessie J wiped herself on at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee concert? Do your research. For instance, with a signed item, try to find out how it was acquired by the seller. Can you see a picture of the signature? Does it match another example of a signed item by the same celebrity? Memorabilia can be cherished greatly, but is far too easy to fake.

8 FAKE RATINGS

You have chosen to deal with a particular seller because they have a 100% positive rating with several happy buyers. Are you sure that these are genuine buyers? Have you looked at what they bought? It's not very difficult to set up several fake eBay accounts and use them to buy very cheap eBay items that were listed by another fake eBay account, thus building up a ratings portfolio paid for with a few hundred eBay listing fees.

This sounds like a lot of effort to go to, but if the seller is selling something expensive, like jewellery or large electrical items, it may be worth building up a fake profile in order to get away with a few bogus sales before cessation of trading. If you're buying something that costs more than a few pounds, perhaps look at the items and other eBay users listed on the seller's feedback profile. It's harder to fake a lot of genuine satisfied customers, buying the same item as you, who have been eBay users for years.

9 THE IMPOSSIBLE TO GET ITEM

A lot of people use eBay to buy something that's not available elsewhere. If you're looking for something that everyone is trying to buy, where genuine stocks are in short supply, the chances are that you'll risk rubbing shoulders with some dodgy sellers. Whether it's the latest videogames console or tickets to a sold-out music festival, the season's hot properties are going to appear on eBay, and not all of the listings are going to be genuine. Even with the genuine article, the chances are that you might be dealing with a trader who's bought from the limited stock in order to tout the item at an inflated price to make a profit. It's up to you whether you wish to line this person's pockets.

If you're buying sold-out festival tickets, you're advised to check whether those tickets are genuinely

transferable. Go to the festival's website and find out about the security measures. Many festivals have learned from the over-touting of Glastonbury tickets in previous years and now have strict policies regarding ticket transfers.

10 TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

There are some excellent deals to be had on eBay, but the fundamental concepts of trading still apply to eBay sellers. In other words, although you can get a huge discount buying something directly from an eBay seller, who may be running without the overheads of a larger business, they still have to source the goods from somewhere and pay something similar to the usual trade price. If anything is discounted too much or seems to be too good a deal, you need to question exactly why. How sure can you be that you're buying what you expect? How sure can you be that the goods are legitimate?

If something looks too good to be true...

11 THE JOKE ITEM/DO NOT USE EBAY WHILE DRUNK!

At number 11 in the list of ten, this is definitely the joker in the pack. Sometimes people make bizarre things and put them on eBay. Sometimes, in the spirit of adventure or under the influence of alcohol, some items seem like a good purchase. A joke item may have been listed on eBay to make people laugh and raise a couple of pounds. A serious item like, say, a wheelchair, may also seem like a hilarious purchase when you're drunk. Beware the joke item; it will only seem like a good idea until it arrives. Strangely, the novelty wears off and you're left with the eBay equivalent of a hangover.

Dishonourable Mentions

Don't forget to avoid:

- DVDs with the same name as a famous film, but which happen to be the non-famous film-adaptation of the story.
- Revenge items – the disgruntled husband trying to sell his estranged wife by putting her personal details on eBay. Don't ring her; for all you know, the whole thing is a scam. Anyway, someone else probably beat you to asking her out.
- Dodgy photos. Don't look in the reflections in photos of furniture or ceramics; some men forget to wear clothes while photographing their items.
- The 'question about your eBay item' scam. Spam emails, possibly snuck through eBay's system, inviting you to look at particular eBay items you've never heard of. If you wanted to look at an eBay item, you'd search for it.

WEBSITE REVIEW

LOW COST BID

www.lowcostbid.com

★★★★★



Pretty straightforward and basic, this one.

LowCostBid is a limited misspelling search engine, which gets you to type in what you're looking for, choose from a small collection of options, and that's that. From there, the service will deliver results live from eBay.

It's quite an effective search, but other services do this better (with options such as filtering out accessories content). On the upside, LowCostBid is quick, and loads at speed. It's not an essential site by any measure, though.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

USAF ORDINANCE



Bidding for a disarmed USAF Hughes AIM-4D Falcon Missile reached \$3,950, but didn't hit its reserve price.

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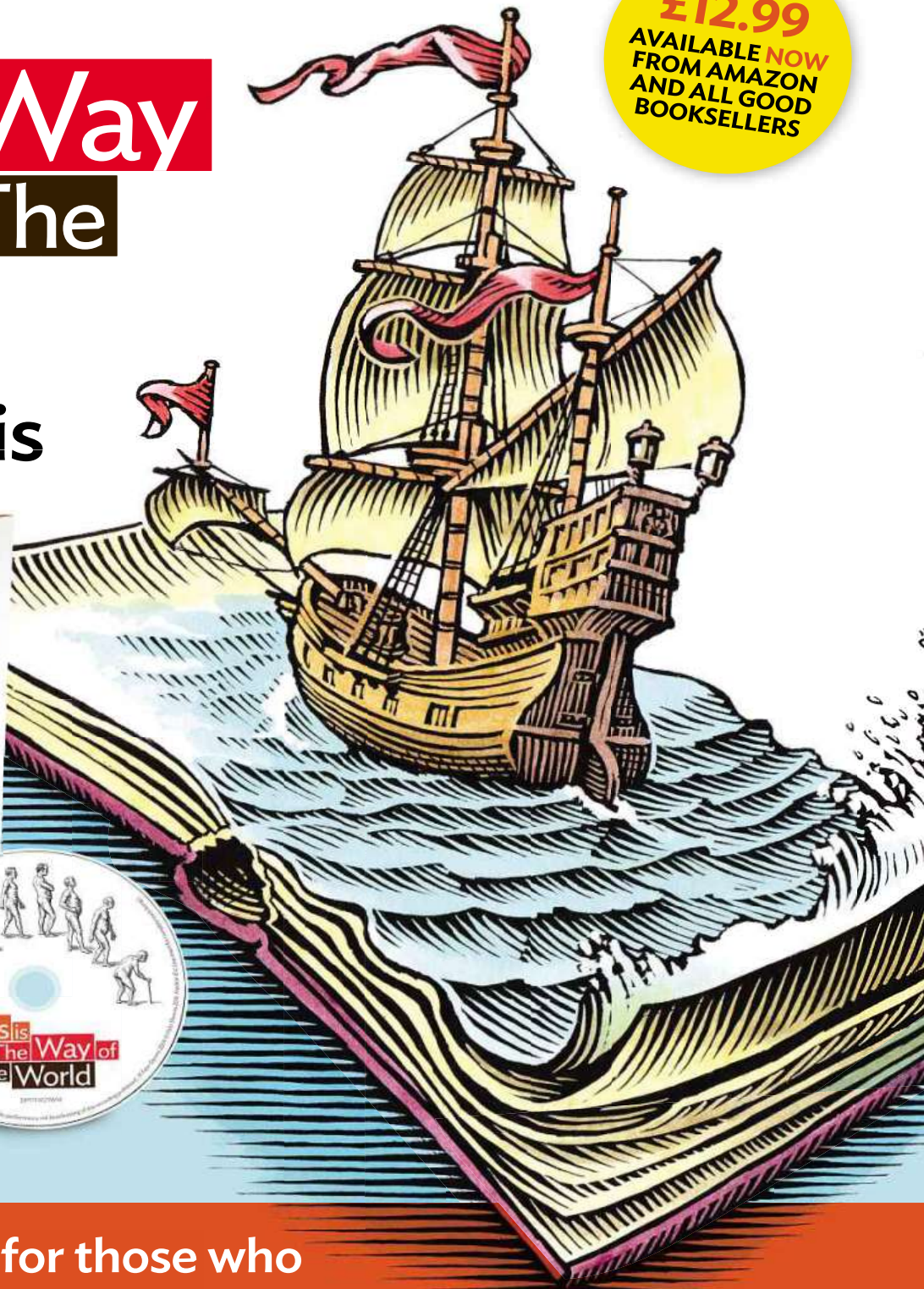
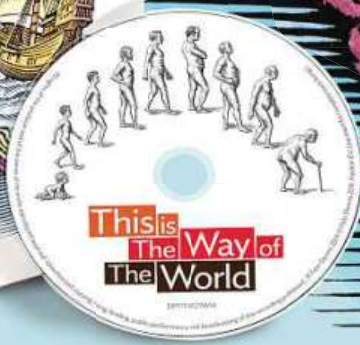
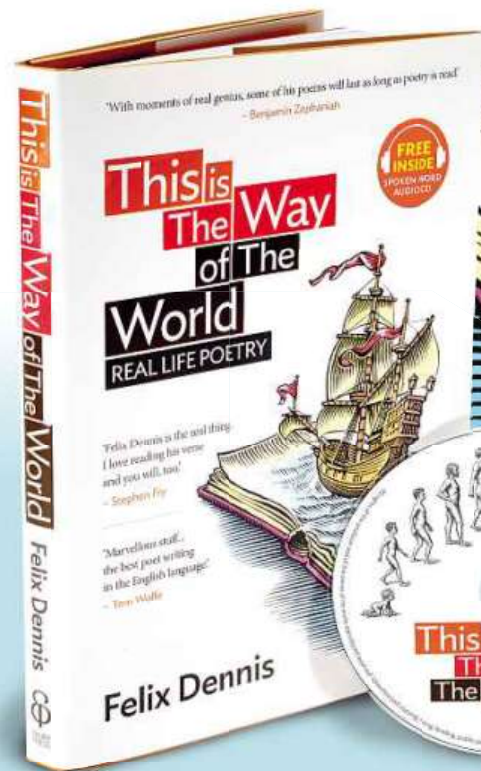
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Case Study: From Aldi To Harrods

Want to make money from eBay? Blogger Emma Russell-Bennett explains how she uses the site to make extra cash...

Most of us could probably do with a bit more money from time to time. Or even all the time. And most of us probably have a few tricks and tips we use when our money doesn't quite seem to stretch far enough, whether that means taking a packed lunch to work towards the end of the month or scouring outlet stores for cut-price designer clothes. Emma Russell-Bennett, though, takes saving money to a whole new level.

In 2010, Emma started a blog about clever ways to make and save money. Called From Aldi To Harrods (fromalditoharrods.com), the blog now has hundreds of loyal fans, all keen to read about new ways to make their cash go further. One of the foolproof money-making methods Emma uses is, of course, selling on eBay.



▲ Emma is using eBay to raise funds for her wedding

Like many of us, Emma started off as a buyer. "I was trying to get a good deal on a Freeview box," she said. "Then I tried selling a few unwanted items to free up some cash." That initial success spurred Emma on. After finding out how quick and easy it could be to sell things on eBay, she realised that as well as selling her own stuff, she could also make a profit by finding interesting things at car boot sales and auctioning them off.

She's careful about the things she picks up, though. "I always stick with things I know. 'I'm interested in clothes, make-up and other cosmetics, so the items I tend to pick up are vintage clothes, plus size clothes, designer shoes, new high end make up and gift sets. I always try to stick to things I know, because I'd hate to make a loss because I wasn't sure about something."

It's a smart strategy, because Emma's eye for a bargain means she knows when a car boot sale seller is undervaluing something. While they might just want to go home at the end of the sale with an empty car and only have a limited number of potential buyers, she can take things home, clean them up and offer them to a far bigger audience online – for more money.

Even though she usually knows roughly how much to expect from any given sale, sometimes things turn out to be more valuable than even Emma realises. One of her most successful sales came when she picked up a bargain bundle from a car boot seller and used her eBay canniness to turn a massive profit. "I bought a job lot of over 50 vintage cameras from a boot sale for £6," she said. "I listed them individually for 99p each and was surprised to find one sell for £52.01. It took me about six weeks to sell them all, but I made over £100." Admittedly, she had to invest a bit of time and patience to list all the cameras separately, but it definitely paid off.

Although she's been an eBay expert for a few years, Emma has an extra reason to want to make money right now. "I'm saving for a wedding and a honeymoon," she said. "So the extra cash I make on eBay is going towards that." She's even got her fiancé involved, though his interests are a little different from hers: "He sells Warhammer and other miniature models."

Emma's Top Tips For Selling On eBay:

- **Use Royal Mail's postage calculator:**
"Always work out your postage before listing an item. Selling your item and then getting to the Post Office to find that you've made a loss is a horrible feeling."
- **Be smart with your auction timings:**
"End your auctions at prime times. Sunday

afternoon and evenings are good, but weekday afternoons are good times to end your auctions."

- **List and list again:**
"Use the eBay autorelist feature to relist your items for free if they haven't sold. They will be relisted three times, and I've had some great surprise sales from this feature."

Emma's not stingy about sharing her eBay knowhow either. "I write guides on my blog to help sellers work out their postage costs before listing their items or to help them know what to do when their buyer opens a case against them."

And she's quick to reassure people who worry about getting ripped off when they're getting started selling on the site. "eBay is really listening to sellers and making the experience much more enjoyable for them, whereas before it had the reputation of always siding with the buyer," she told us. "eBay and PayPal offer both the buyer and the seller protection, and I've had instances where they have sided with me as the seller."

If you're doing everything right, there's every chance eBay will side with you – so do your best to be open and honest, and always keep records, like the proof of postage receipts issued by the Post Office. Of course, there will always be dishonest types out there, but eBay and PayPal have procedures in place designed to keep everyone safe, so you don't need to worry too much.



▲ Vintage clothing is popular on eBay, so if you know what you're looking for, charity shop or car boot finds might turn a profit

For Emma, the advantages of using the site far outweigh the small risks. "The great thing about eBay is that there are millions of buyers registered, so my items are always seen," she enthused. "eBay is great for everyone who needs to free up some extra cash, whether it's for bills or towards a wedding, like us. You can get your items listed in a few minutes, and if you have a smartphone or a tablet you'll find that listings take a fraction of the time they used to."

So what are you waiting for? There's plenty of money to be made through selling on eBay; Emma is living proof of that.



▲ From Aldi To Harrods is Emma's blog about making and saving money...



▲ More specialist objects, like vintage cameras, can also make lots of money

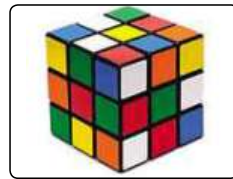


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CHAPTER 4

ADVANCED SELLING

Setting Up An eBay Shop

If you have lots of regular stock to sell, then you may want to consider setting up your own shop. We look at getting a store up and running

After you've dipped your toes into the eBay waters, you'll have gained a good feel for the buying and selling process. However, if you want to take your selling to higher level, then it's worth setting up an eBay shop.

By doing so, you're not limited to one-off auctions or short-term advertisements of your goods. You'll be able to get yourself noticed, work on a larger scale and sell to your heart's content. In this chapter, we're going to explain what a shop actually is and how it will benefit you, the eBay seller. We'll explore how you go about setting up your shop and, more importantly, whether or not it's worth doing.

OPEN ALL HOURS

Using eBay to sell the odd item is a great way to make some extra cash, but if you're planning on using eBay to make a living, then you'll need a good way to make your auctions stand out from the crowd and make a name for yourself in the eBay community. Selling items and providing a great service is a good way of doing this, but feedback alone won't get your merchandise the coverage you need.

One of the most effective methods to get this wide coverage and high profile is to set up an eBay shop, granting access to a whole heap of benefits. If all goes well, you'll shift more stock than ever before – a fact that eBay is proud to state, with a claim that “75% of eBay Shops sellers surveyed said that opening an eBay shop increased their sales.”

An eBay shop is your own personal virtual storefront on the eBay site. Whereas selling individual items with a normal eBay auction account lets you

put items up for sale that can then be searched for among all other items currently listed on the site, having a shop means you have your very own marketplace. In this shop you can list and sell as many items as you like, with no one else's listings cluttering up the place.

The shop comes with your own customised header (shop name and/or logo), as well as your own search feature (to search through all the items you sell), promotional sections and even the option to include a newsletter, among many other things. This all adds up to your own personalised area of commerce, and it's a fantastic way to get your business up and running. You can enjoy some of the benefits of a bricks and mortar business but without the overheads. There's no shop floor to rent and no staff or utility bills to pay – just the monthly subscription.

REQUIREMENTS

Before you consider setting up your own shop, you'll need to meet the minimum demands laid down by eBay. You obviously need to be a registered eBay user, so if you've never sold anything on eBay before, you'll be unable to jump right in and set up shop. You'll also need to ensure that your PayPal account is linked to your eBay account too. To run a featured shop, you also need to be a registered business seller on eBay and maintain a 12-month average detailed sellers ratings score of 4.4 or above in each of the four areas that eBay users score. Those running Anchor shops must have an average score of 4.6 across the four areas too.

EBAY SHOP FEATURES

The additional features available to eBay shop owners are many and varied. Some are basic extensions of current eBay features, and others are in-depth options geared towards larger-scale e-commerce. Let's look at some of the benefits you can expect.

To start with, your shop will be enveloped in your own store branding and will have a custom web address. This includes your own shop header featuring your own design and logos. Although the full eBay header still remains at the top for users on the Basic package (with the header being greatly reduced for Featured and Anchored shops), your own identity is still clear.



▲ If you use a logo on your shop and emails, that can help strengthen your brand identity

DID YOU KNOW?

Pierre Omidyar founded eBay on 3rd September 1995. It was originally called AuctionWeb.

In the header, you can also enter your shop description. This includes your eBay rating, along with a description of your shop and the types of items you sell. By entering keywords into the shop description that accurately describe your shop, people looking for the types of goods you sell will find you far more easily.

The Basic package used to be limited when it came to the header, and you could only select from available templates. Now, just as with the Featured or Anchored packages, you're able to fully customise your header (with HTML), forming a truly unique banner that can be used not only on your shop, but in other advertising too. This banner can include links to self-hosted pictures, text and details of highlighted items and offers.

It's also possible to create and customise your own store-front pages. This grants your shop even more distinction. These pages, like the header, are created using HTML, so if you have the skills, you can let your imagination run wild or you could pay someone to design it for you. Depending on the package you choose, you're limited to a number of custom pages, with those opting for the Basic subscription having the ability to make use of up to five custom pages in their shop.

TAGS

This customised content is all handled via the HTML builder tool eBay supplies, as well as some useful wizards. To help users get the most out of this user-defined content, eBay has also created special tags which, when combined with the right HTML code, can quickly add useful information to your shop.

These tags include {eBayUserID}, which will display your eBay User ID, along with your feedback score (including any relevant icons), {eBayFeedback}, which can display detailed feedback information in various configurations, and {StoreItemShowcase}, which is a very useful bit of code, which, when used with your own settings, displays some of the items you're selling in your promotional boxes.

These tags eliminate the need to type out whole reams of code, and they let users of all HTML abilities build their stores with ease. However, eBay has restricted the use of some shop tags (specifically the item specific shops tags) in the eBay Shops header. Using these restricted shop tags in the header will result in the shop tag appearing as text and eBay asks people not to use {eBayStoresItemList}, {eBayStoresItemShowcase}, {eBayStoresItem}, {eBayStoresItemDetail} and {eBayPromo}.

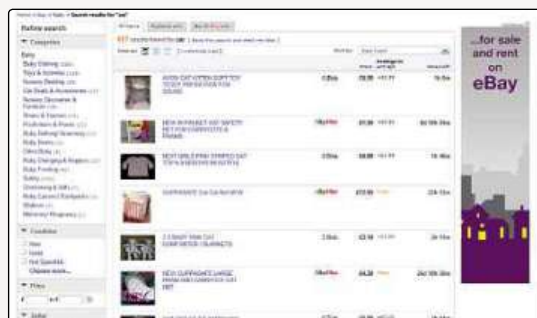
For a listing of these useful tags and the available settings to be used with them, visit pages.ebay.co.uk/help/specialties/stores-specific-tags.html.

Number Of Free Fixed Price Listings eBay Shop Subscribers Are Entitled To (Per Month)

Basic Shop	Featured Shop	Anchor Shop
200	1,200	50,000

eBay Shop Listings Final Value Fees For Different Kinds Of Items (Business Sellers)

Category	Final Value Fee
Item not sold (irrespective of category)	No fee
All collecting categories (e.g. antiques, coins, collectables)	9% of final value
Business, office and industrial (e.g. office supplies, shopfitting)	10% of final value
Electronic devices (e.g. computers, headphones, DIY tools)	5% of final value (up to a maximum of £20)
Electronic accessories (e.g. cameras, tablets and phones, audio and DVD)	8% of final value
Fashion (e.g. clothes, shoes, watches)	10% of final value (up to a maximum of £50 on watches)
Furniture and bath (e.g. beds, showers)	9% (up to a maximum of £40)
Media (e.g. books, music, DVDs)	8%
Tyres	6% of final value (up to a maximum of £15)
Everything else (except vehicles)	11% of final value



▲ Using the List View option means you can display more products on screen at once

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SEARCH AND CATEGORIES

Along with the personalised header and custom page design, you'll get some staple additions, such as your own search and category boxes. Using the categories system, you can split the items you want to sell into different sections. For example, you could have a clothes section, a section for electronic goods and a special section for collector's items.

You can have up to 300 categories at once, and all your categories can be changed and updated when you like. Changing names will not affect the item listings found within. You can also use subcategories too, further enhancing your browsing functions.

For people wishing to sell a lot of merchandise, this use of categories is a bonus, and it enables the quick and easy browsing of your items. Couple this with the search facility, and your items will be within easy reach.

Several promotion boxes are available to all subscription types. These are used to highlight different items being sold on special offer or just to announce new stock, complete with links that take the customer to the item's own page.

Of course, no shop is complete without the main gallery page, where customers can scroll through the items on sale, and the main portion of your shop is taken up by this window.

That's the basic visual make-up of an eBay shop, but that's not all. As with the rest of eBay, when an item is clicked by a user, the product is opened up in a listing frame, which contains all the information associated with the item, along with a larger picture. This function is expanded in an eBay shop, and you have access to a custom listing frame. This is a special frame that allows customised headers and sidebars, thus giving you your own listing windows for your products. Not only does this look more professional, but it's also a great way to advertise your shop, because you have effectively branded your item, which can be discovered by any eBay user, whether they're in your shop or not.

SHOP INVENTORY

You will, no doubt, already be familiar with eBay's two main methods of selling items: auction style and fixed

price. However, when you open an eBay shop you'll have access to a third sale type: Shop Inventory.

This is a special sale-type that lists items at a set price with no bidding. The fee structure for the listings is different to normal options, however. Up-front fee listings are lower, costing you less to place items on sale, but the final value fees if a sale is successful are higher. Your listings have an unlimited duration, as you can choose whether you want a listing to end after 30 days or continue beyond that.

There's also the option of a Good 'Til Cancelled (GTC) listing. This is a special option, which lets you list an item and have it automatically renewed every 30 days (as long as stock is available and assuming your listing fits criteria). This renewal will occur every month until you decide to cancel it (with each 30-day cycle incurring a new listing charge).

MARKETING TOOLS

No self-respecting shop owner would go into business and simply wait for customers to come rolling in. If people don't know your shop exists, they're not likely to visit. This is where the eBay Shops marketing features come into play.

Along with your shop, you'll have access to a range of marketing tools, designed to help you get noticed. One of the most useful is the email marketing tool. Using this you can fire off emails to potential and existing customers, advertising new items or special offers.

As with most of the shop design process, you set up these emails using a step-by-step wizard in which you select the email design and content. You can even include item galleries that users can click on to visit the shop. Feedback can be included, giving your customers peace of mind from the off.

As well as the email service, eBay Shops lets you create promotional flyers that can be posted or packaged with items you sell. You'll also have access to a custom listing frame and listing feeds (such as RSS). Shop comparisons are also an option, making your listings available to third-party search engines and product-comparison sites.

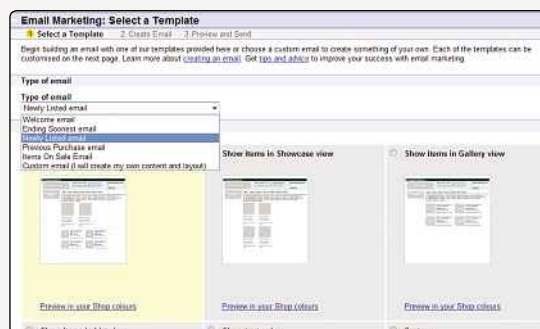
A range of item-based promotional functions are featured too, letting you cross-promote stock, advertise top picks and point users to similar items. You can even customise the email footers and invoices with your own logos. All this marketing muscle should be a very welcome aid for anyone trying to increase their sales.

IS IT WORTH IT?

Setting up an eBay shop certainly sounds like a good idea on paper, but will setting up your own shop help increase your sales? Can the extra costs be justified? Would some users be better off staying with one-off

DID YOU KNOW?

eBay no longer includes digitally delivered items such as ebooks in its feedback system. This is because some users made multiple purchases of such items, which often go for pennies with no postal costs, to artificially inflate their feedback score.



▲ Increase your shop's profile with the 'Email Marketing' tool

How To... Set Up Custom Pages

While the standard eBay pages aren't bad, if you really want to look professional, you'll want to add some extra personality. Here's how:

- 1 Custom Pages can be used to give your shop a more personalised look. Creating one is easy. Select the Custom Pages link from the Shop Manager menu and you'll see this screen. Select the layout from the range of templates, and click 'Continue' to go the next step.
- 2 Now you can tweak and refine your page. You'll need to give the page a title, and you can then start to add in the required text. At

various points in this section you can also use eBay's HTML Builder, to further customise your page.

- 3 Custom pages also let you employ promotion boxes for various uses, such as advertising new items or linking to other sections of the shop. You can also design your own promo boxes if you wish.
- 4 You can now add some more custom text to the page (again, with the help of the HTML Builder, if needed), and you can specify the item display type. To emphasise your items, you can also opt to hide the left-hand navigation bar, giving prime real-estate solely to your stock.



auctions? The only people who can really answer these questions are actual shop owners.

Given the amount of extra coverage and space an eBay shop provides, it's no surprise that many shop owners are glad they decided to set one up. Cathy Grant, owner of Aromabar (stores.ebay.co.uk/Aromabar), is very happy with her featured eBay shop but would like more power and custom control. "I'm happy with my eBay store on the whole but would prefer to have more free, easy-to-use tools provided by eBay to allow me to make the design and layout better, as I feel it could look more professional."

Like many eBay shop owners, Cathy runs her eBay shop in parallel to her own website, and she sees distinct benefits in running a stand-alone site: "I've made more profit on sales through my own site due to no fees. I paid a total of £40 for my site template with hosting and have done all the hard work myself." So eBay shops may be easy to set up, but having your own site is still the way to go for many users.

Other eBay shop owners don't necessarily open a shop for the profits alone and instead use it as a glorified advert for their real shop. Peter, who used to run Genki Video Games as an eBay store, is one example. He appreciates the extra coverage that an

WEBSITE REVIEW

THE WHINE SELLER

thewhineseller.com

★★★★★



For four years now, The Whine Seller has been an impressive blog, aimed at those looking to sell their wares on eBay, Amazon, Etsy and such like. It's a very human site, with a mix of grumbles, strategies and thoughts on eBay and other services.

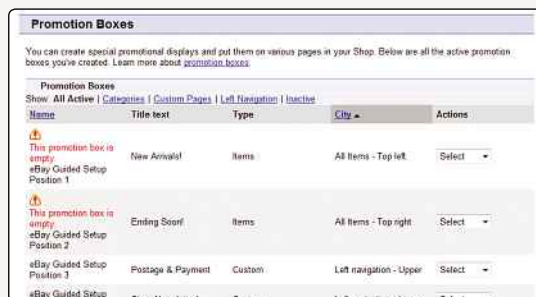
There's a mass of high-quality material here too, and The Whine Seller really benefits by being regularly updated by someone who knows their stuff. An excellent resource all round.

DID YOU KNOW?

Singer James Blunt loves eBay: he actually says he used to have 'a mild addiction' to the site!

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▲ Creating promotional displays



▲ The shop summary page

eBay shop grants but doesn't welcome the additional costs. At the time, he said, "The main reason we use eBay is to try to get some additional coverage for our website. To be honest, I'm not sure we even break even once the listing fee, subscription fee, percentage of sale fee and PayPal fee is taken," he said.

Having a store doesn't guarantee extra visits either. "We do use auctions, but only to get attention for our store, as it seems surfers on eBay are far more drawn to auctions."

It's clear that having an eBay shop can be beneficial to setting up a business online, if only for the expanded audience and the extra advertising it generates. The costs are scalable, thanks to the three subscription options, and as long as you have the stock to keep your shop up and running, you'll have a constant outlet for your merchandise that gives you access to a range of extra features not as readily available to many stand-alone web stores.

However, many eBay shops have shut, after their owners became disillusioned with the service. Julie Stamp ran Lolli Dollies on eBay but has since closed it in favour of a stand-alone store. "For me, one of the drawbacks of running an eBay shop is that customers seem to think you're there to answer any enquiries they have – in my case, with regards to doll collecting or a doll already in their collection, rather than sticking to questions about items in your eBay shop."

She said the amount of admin time and space required for packaging material is off-putting, but the advantage is having your items sold to a worldwide customer base. "If you sell to a niche market, eBay is ideal, as it tends to be the first stop



▲ Sort your goods out with the shop categories



▲ Keywords help potential customers find you

for collectors," she said. "Search engine optimisation is a given with eBay, and listing items and uploading photos is easy."

Mark Withers, who used to actively sell pictures on eBay, now uses his stand-alone site but said, "What eBay does is help you build your own unique brand, and it's an easy point of contact and bookmark. You can organise products into custom categories, making it easier for the customer to find products. There's a buyer confidence with eBay, and while I don't actively sell on eBay any more, I do pursue other business interests associated with it, helping other sellers get started."

SHOP MAINTENANCE

When your shop is built, you can manage it from the Shop Management screen. You'll find a raft of options that cater for every facet of your new trading empire. A good place to start is by organising your stock.

Select 'Shop Categories' from the left-hand menu and you'll be taken to the category screen. Click the 'Add Category' button to create your sections. Enter them into the boxes provided and then click 'Save'. Your categories will be added. You can add more if you like, and can also create subcategories.

Click the 'Promotion Boxes' link to customise these useful features and create more. You can move boxes around, change the box type, content text and name. You can view boxes by category and can edit, remove or duplicate existing ones.

Just as with any website, search keywords are invaluable. Without them your shop would be very hard to find – not good for sales.

Subscription Types And Fees

BASIC SHOP

The starter pack of the shop system. This is the option for most users, and is great for first-time sellers or those who want to see if a shop is the right option for them before advancing further.

FEATURED SHOP

Has more options for tracking sales and performance and has more advertising tools. Good for users who want to begin their business growth.

ANCHOR SHOP

The high-end option for advanced eBay sellers who need to get as much coverage as possible and who need to manage their business on a daily basis. Has the most advertising options.

eBay Shops Tariffs

	Basic	Featured	Anchor
Monthly subscription fee	£20.85 including VAT	£62.60 including VAT	£260.86 including VAT
One-time set-up fee	£0	£0	£0
Sales management tools	N/A	£0 (Selling Manager Pro)	£0 (Selling Manager Pro)

Build Your Shop	Basic	Featured	Anchor
Shop home page and unlimited product pages	Yes	Yes	Yes
Custom pages	Five pages	Ten pages	15 pages
Custom web address	Yes	Yes	Yes
Promotion boxes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shop categories	300	300	300
Custom shop header	Yes	Yes	Yes
eBay header reduction	No	Yes	Yes
Sales Management			
Free sales management tools	No	Selling Manager Pro	Selling Manager Pro
Vacation/holiday	Yes	Yes	Yes
Picture manager (hosting images)	1MB free	1MB free and reduced subscription fees	50MB free and reduced subscription fees

Promote Your Shop	Basic	Featured	Anchor
On eBay			
Increased Exposure On eBay			
Shops logo appears next to your shop name in listings	Yes	Yes	Yes
All listings include additional 'See All Items Listed in Your Shop' link	Yes	Yes	Yes
Listings displayed in eBay Shops gateway search and results browser	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shop name appears in 'Related Shops' search results	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently
Rotating promotional space on the eBay Shops gateway	None	Text link at centre of page	Shop logo at top of page
Cross-promotions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Custom listing frame	Yes	Yes	Yes
HTML builder	Yes	Yes	Yes
Off eBay			
Email marketing	1,000 emails per month	2,500 emails per month	5,000 emails per month
Promotional flyers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shop-branded business materials	Yes	Yes	Yes
Search engine keyword management	Yes	Yes	Yes
Listing feeds	Yes	Yes	Yes
Track Your Success			
Traffic reports	Yes	Yes (advanced info)	Yes (advanced info)

Keeping On Top Of Business

Building up sales is part of the challenge for the serious eBay user. However, it can be a stressful business, so be prepared

If you've been selling items on eBay for a while and want to ramp up the amount of goods you sell, then you'll need to become more organised. At the basic level, when you sell one or a handful of items, you have to list your goods, respond to queries, complete the sale, take payment and ship the goods. And all you need is the main eBay website, the My eBay account section, a consumer PayPal account and a cheap digital camera to photograph the goods with.

However, as the volume of products you sell on eBay increases, it will become clear very quickly that you need to keep a closer eye on a fair few other things. For example, how do you keep on top of money? Or of tracking payments? Of stock? Of postage? Of storage? Some people find the basic eBay sales tools aren't really up to the job of volume sales or, if you go a step further, running an eBay business. It is easy to very quickly get yourself into an administrative organisational and logistical mess that will do nothing for your reputation, seller rating or finances.

As many of you will know, the popularity of eBay means it's an obvious business opportunity, and with the downturn in the economy leaving more people without steady employment, being able to make extra cash buying and selling will be welcomed. As anyone who's started a business will tell you, however, you do need to be aware of tax, accounting and legalities. If you end up selling online in order to subsidise your income, then such regular activity will mean you may come to the attention of the Inland Revenue.

Within three months of starting your business, you need to contact the Inland Revenue (it also has a handy guide to getting things off the ground at www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup/index.htm) and decide whether or not you're going to be self-employed or a limited company. You will also want to set up a bank account separate from your personal one in order to keep a better check on your finances.

This chapter won't delve too deeply in the accounting side of running a company, because it could fill an entire book in itself. There are,

however, computer programs available that can help you to manage an increased customer base and ensure that your cash flow is properly accounted for.

PAYMENTS

Most eBay users who move up a scale into volume selling may struggle to keep a check on payments, however. It's easy to lose track of payments and work out when an item is ready to ship. Some people may pay by PayPal immediately, while others may opt for a cheque that takes a week to arrive. All the while, you need to keep on top of this and ensure orders don't get missed or that items aren't shipped before a payment has cleared.

Before you look at how to do this, you should consider the core parts of a transaction. This way it's easier to work out what kind of applications or services you'll need to help you out, and you can develop systems to help you keep on top of things.

The basics of an eBay transaction from start to finish roughly goes like this:

- Identify product to sell.
- Write product description.
- Determine starting price (along with reserve price or Buy It Now pricing, if applicable).
- Source/take photography.
- Determine postal costs.
- Assemble/publish auction page.
- Respond to presales queries.
- Conclude sale.
- Generate invoice for winning bidder.
- Send reminders as necessary.
- Collect payment via electronic payment service or physical payment method (cheque, postal order, cash, etc.).
- Dispatch goods.
- Leave and receive feedback.

The basic start-to-finish process can become more complicated by multiple-item sales to the same buyer, requests for combined or overseas postage quotes, items returned as faulty, items not

DID YOU KNOW?

When Melbourne-based IT professional Neil Moreton was scammed by a seller, he set up a wiki for himself and other victims to exchange information. They passed their collected dossier on to the police, who soon arrested the miscreant.



▲ Selling Manager is a free tool

received at all, requests to collect items in person and requests to pay by other means (cheque, cash, postal orders, other electronic payment services). Therefore, if someone is going to sell in volume on eBay, they need tools and software in place to manage and automate as much of the process as possible. The option that many eBay home and small businesses opt for is the web-based all-in-one eBay management system.

SINGLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

As you start to sell in volume, you begin to realise that the workload becomes so vast that without software to help you, it's likely you will struggle. However, before you take the plunge, you need to know what you'll need the software for; if you're struggling to keep track of your items, unsure who should be sent what or whether a bidder has paid or not, then you will require an auction management package.

These programs act like a big toolbox, offering you everything you need to get your listings up and running, keeping a check of the stock that you have and aiding you with labelling your items, working out payments and allowing you to work with email templates, which come in handy when dealing with your buyers.

You could start with eBay's own Turbo Lister, a package that lets you upload in bulk. What it doesn't do, though, is allow you to get a grip on payment management, and that's where the free eBay tool Selling Manager comes in.

Working online, it allows for better listings management. It lets you track your shipping, payment and feedback status more easily than within eBay itself, but it doesn't allow you to create listings (although you can relist sold and unsold items). Therefore, anyone using Selling Manager would probably want to use Turbo Lister alongside it, allowing the former to manage the listings created by the latter.

By using Selling Manager you will also be able to cut down on the amount of time you spend sending emails, since it has customisable templates that



▲ Volo isn't restricted to eBay

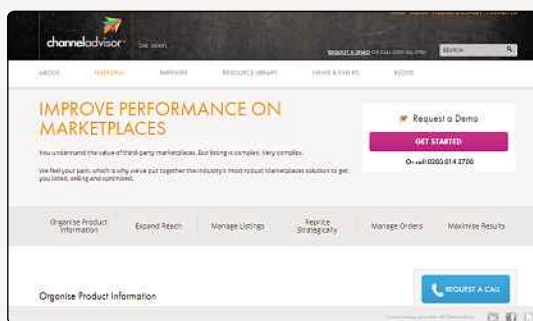
you can use. The program also allows for the printing of smart-looking labels and invoices, and it even lets you tap in a selection of feedback comments that you'll be able to quickly add to buyers' accounts, thereby greatly reducing the time needed to type them in one by one.

If you're serious about your business, you may want to try eBay's Selling Manager Pro, which costs £4.99 a month. It allows you to create listings and it also has facilities for automatic listing and relisting, automated payment and shipping status. Usefully, you can create monthly profit and loss reports, discover your products' success ratio and average selling price and download your sales history as a .csv file.

THIRD-PARTY HELP

Of course, you don't have to use eBay's own auction management tools. Depending on the extent to which you want to grow your eBay activities, you can choose a third-party tool. Volo (www.volocommerce.com), formerly eSellerPro) has many fans, and it not only allows you to work with eBay, but it also integrates with sites such as Amazon, and it comes with a complete stock management system that even covers ordering from suppliers. It has designs that can be used for the website too.

Channel Advisor (www.channeladvisor.co.uk) is one of the most popular single solution for managing an entire eBay business, but it can be



▲ Channel Advisor offers help for sellers who do a lot of business

WEBSITE REVIEW

POWER SELLERS FORUM

powersellersforum.com

★★★★☆



Wise heads are to be found in abundance at the long-established Power Sellers Forum. Mixing in lots of eBay resources (templates, bargain finders, suppliers lists), the guts of the site remain the popular forums. These aren't as populous as some others to be found online, but the quality of what people have to say more than compensates for this.

Don't let the plain appearance of Power Sellers Forum fool you for a minute: this is a site well worth bookmarking.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

THE MELVINS' MELVAN



Before becoming famous himself, Nirvana's frontman Kurt Cobain was a big fan of punk rock band The Melvins – he even decorated the side of their tour van (the 'Melvan') with a Kiss-style mural drawn in felt-tip. The van was put on eBay in March 2013 with a reserve of \$130,000, but sadly no one wanted to pay for this piece of music history.

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expensive and it's really aimed at heavy auction business. It makes it easier to deal with bulk purchases, with the software allowing you to take full advantage of eBay, delivering a level of operational automation, and helping you sell more. It claims to lower costs and enhance customer service, in short making dealing with bulk items easier for the seller.

One of the benefits of Marketplaces is being able to manage an entire eBay transaction from start to finish. It can handle the initial creation and uploading of an auction item, including creating pages in advance and presetting future start times for auctions, thus automating the replenishment of active auctions. Marketplaces can also host product images (you get between 100MB and 500MB of space), dispensing with the need for a separate image-hosting service such as Flickr or even paying eBay to use images in an auction. While the auction is running, it can help you keep track of the number of watchers, the number of visitors to each auction page, the number of bids in a single view and it can automate most communications with the buyer.

Aside from automating the eBay sales process, Marketplaces also provides tools for postage management and integrates it with PayPal for payment collection. The problem is that it's geared up more for heavy business. If you're after a simpler system of keeping track of eBay's comings and goings, you may well want something else.

NetSuite (www.netsuite.co.uk/suitecommerce) is a popular hosted business application suite. It's designed for small businesses and integrates with eBay as one of several ways to sell goods. It offers many of the same features as Marketplaces, such as integration with postal services and payment

management, and it can combine an existing web-based shop (created and hosted in NetSuite) with eBay auctions. Therefore, the items a seller has listed on eBay can be taken from an existing online store and auctions shown in the same store. This is useful if you're using eBay for fixed-price Buy It Now sales rather than traditional auctions.

STORAGE

As your business grows, so too will the space you need to keep the items you're selling. And once you've taken up the garage, shed and children's bedrooms, you may be forced to look elsewhere in order to keep your stock in one place and your family from screaming at you.

Companies such as Safestore Self Storage (www.safestore.co.uk) have premises all across Britain. Annoyingly, there are no prices on the Safestore website, but many customers comment on its low cost, and how much you will pay is determined by the space you will need. There are many similar storage companies across the country, however, so it's worth doing a search online for a solution that suits you.

One thing worth factoring in, whether at home or in a storage facility, is a small area dedicated to packing and shipping. When you put an item up for sale, make sure it's located within your storage area, to prevent you having to search around for it. Indeed, it's important to organise your items well, and if you stack them, you can optimise your space.

Use plastic bags to help prevent items from developing smells or becoming musty. Bags also ensure items don't rub together and cause damage. Label each item and place them in boxes that are labelled alphabetically, which means you can get at them with greater ease and, if possible, buy transparent boxes so you can easily keep an eye on stock levels and know exactly what's in each container. If you develop good storage habits, you'll save lots of time.

An alternative to storage that's worth exploring is drop shipping. Essentially, this will mean the goods that you sell aren't kept in stock by you. Your orders are transferred to a manufacturer or a wholesaler, which then dispatches the item directly to the customer on your behalf. You take the difference in price between the amount you've sold at and the wholesale cost.

Some research online is needed, and you also need to understand the potential pitfalls (if an item isn't in stock at the warehouse, you'll be one receiving the hassle from a customer, and it becomes your job to find out if enough stock is available and that the price hasn't changed).

NETSUITE

Your ENTIRE Ecommerce Business...
One COMPLETE Solution!
Web Store—Sales—Inventory—Accounting

Thousands of Ecommerce Companies Trust Their Business on NetSuite SuiteCommerce

- Advanced Customisable Ecommerce Solution with Multi-Language, Multi-Currency, and Multi-Store Capability
- Real-time Reporting for Webstore, Inventory, Order Management and Sales
- Automated Processes to Improve Accuracy, Efficiency and Customer Satisfaction
- Anytime, Anywhere Access to Your Online Business
- Deliver the Same Web Store Experience across Any Currency, Any Sales Channel, and Any Mobile Device

In order to personalise your Free Product Tour, please provide the following information:

Fields marked with an * are required.

First Name*
Last Name*
Work Email*
Phone*
Company*

▲ NetSuite is designed for small businesses



▲ Self storage is an option worth thinking about

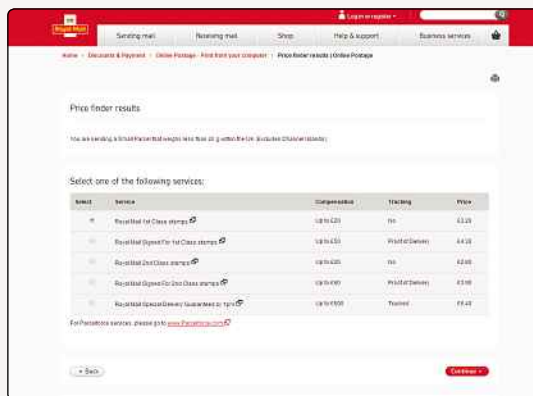
LOGISTICS AND SHIPPING

Depending on the size of your item, you may opt to use the standard postal service or you might decide to try out a courier. Using Royal Mail for postage has got much easier for the eBay seller, because you can now buy postage online and print it yourself (www.royalmail.com/personal/uk-delivery/online-postage). Online prepaid postage is the closest thing to having your own franking machine, without the costs and complexity of actually owning one. It also means that postage can be applied in the seller's own time, with the prepaid, pre-labelled packages dropped off, rather than the user having to queue to weigh and pay for postage for each individual item. For example, the cost of a first class stamp via home printing is exactly the same as a traditional stamp (£0.60), so online stamps are cheaper than a franking machine as well.

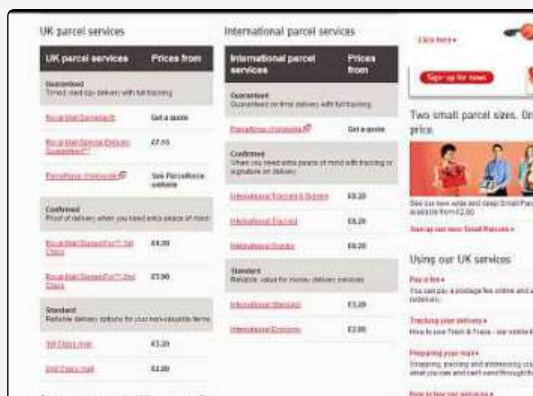
Royal Mail can also supply a post office box (PO Box) for your incoming mail in the same way as commercial services like Mail Boxes Etc. A Royal Mail PO Box costs £185 a year or £105 for six months, and it's usually hosted at a local sorting office or a large main post office. A seller can either collect the mail themselves or, for an additional fee, have it delivered with the regular post. Either option means a seller doesn't have to reveal their address to strangers and can handle returns and payment by post.

Two essential purchases you'll need to make are a set of scales and a tape measure. With Royal Mail postal prices now based on size as well as weight, it's important these metrics can be measured accurately, so that the correct postage is applied. Failure to apply the right postage will result in the buyer being hit with a surcharge from the postman before they can receive the goods.

High-street shipping specialists such as Mail Boxes Etc (www.mbe.co.uk) have branches all over the UK and can offer specialist services to eBay sellers trying to tackle posting and package management. As well as providing packaging supplies and space to package goods, stores such as these can also help



▲ Print your own postage from the Royal Mail website



▲ There's a range of options available from Royal Mail

with the weighing and pricing of packages (particularly heavy and awkward-shaped goods) for conventional posting via Royal Mail (www.royalmail.com) or its parcel arm ParcelForce (www.parcelforce.com). In addition, these stores can tackle the more complex task of sending goods via a courier company such as FedEx (www.fedex.com/gb), UPS (www.ups.com/content/gb/en/index/jsx) or DHL (www.dhl.co.uk) on a per-item basis, without the seller having to set up their own account with the courier company. These stores can also provide a seller with a mailbox to receive incoming mail such as cheque payments, if they don't want the hassle or potential risk of distributing their home address to unknown customers.

Some buyers, particularly overseas customers, will prefer the security of a branded and traceable courier service delivering their goods purchased from an unknown seller. Courier companies can also offer competitive prices for international insured shipping compared to traditional postal services such as Royal Mail. It's worth checking out their prices, at least.

Also, they provide an important alternative to bypass delays caused by strikes, national holidays and the restrictive opening hours of a post office.

WEBSITE REVIEW

SKIP MCGRATH

www.skippmcgrath.co.uk



The problem with Skip McGrath's website of resources is there's not actually much that you can get to without handing over your money first. Reading the testimonials on the site, the man seems to have magic at his fingertips, and his site isn't shy about putting that across. However, it feels more like a sales pitch to sell you his Complete eBay Marketing System, which dilutes the impact of the site he's put together.

He's put together a UK-specific site, to be fair, but it's a sparse one. And while there's every chance the man is an eBay expert, you won't get much evidence of it here.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

ZOMBIE CHICKEN NUGGET

eBay user silversuffice was tucking into a McDonald's dinner and noticed something weird about one of the chicken nuggets – it kind of looked like a zombie's face.

The quick-thinking eBay user popped the nugget in the freezer and managed to auction it off it for \$50. That'd buy a lot of Happy Meals...

CHAPTER 4

ADVANCED
SELLING

Keeping On Top Of Communications

Bad communication as a seller can potentially cause a lot of problems. How do you make sure this doesn't happen to you?

If there's one thing the internet has done for mankind, it's aid communication. Whether we're letting people know what we were up to last night on Facebook or Twitter or filing a quick email to the boss to inform them of the progress of a project, keeping folk in the loop and divulging snippets of information has been made much easier with a keyboard at our fingertips.

So why do so many eBayers go wrong when it comes to communications? Bad communication is at the heart of most disputes, which means it's vital that you keep people up to date when they're buying your items on eBay. If you keep people informed at every opportunity, they're not only far less likely to leave you negative feedback, but they may well be encouraged to buy something else from you in the future, which is great if you decide to move up the ladder of eBay selling and shift items in greater volume.

STARTING POINT

Communication starts from the moment you begin to create your eBay listing. It's important that your descriptions are incredibly clear, because you're trying to give people a feel for an item without them actually being able to get their hands on it before they make a purchase. Go to Amazon.co.uk, Play.com or any number of other top websites and see how they produce listings for ideas, but essentially, you want to give as much information as possible. Indeed, why not go the whole hog; if something needs instructions, maybe put those up as part of your listings so that buyers will be able to see just what they need to do after they make their purchases. Less is not more in the case of eBay, but lay out your listing so that it doesn't overwhelm.

Secondly, make sure everything that's included in your package is listed and, if something that a buyer will believe to be in the box is missing, let them know

DID YOU KNOW?

eBay's customer services department has a poor reputation among its users. Although usually fast with a response, complaints about cut-and-pasted responses that fail to address the question in hand are common.

From	Subject	Date
service@paypal.co.uk	PayPal Electronic Funds Transfer	04/
uk-ebay-fees@ebay.c...	Payment Accepted!	04/
service@paypal.co.uk	Receipt for Your Payment to ebay International AG	04/
eBay	eBay Item Sold: Lexmark X1180 All In One (Printe...	15/
hannahbet@hotmail.c...	Item no.6801782255 - Notification of an Instant P...	15/
eBay	eBay Item Sold: Elbow - Leaders Of The Free Wor...	11/
maf21@wanadoo.nl	Item no.4767742672 - Notification of an Instant P...	11/
eBay	eBay Item Sold: McFly - Wonderland (CD 2005) : ...	04/
steveholt20032000@ya...	Item no.4764922355 - Notification of an Instant P...	04/
wally.welling@midlan...	Item no.4757952406 - Notification of an Instant P...	22/
eBay	eBay Item Sold: Frankie J - The One (CD 2005) BR...	21/
aw-confirm@ebay.com	Action Required -- Credit/Debit Card Payment D...	11/
eBay Member: damian...	Re: Message from eBay Member Regarding Item ...	08/
andycwright@hotmail...	Item no.4753320377 - Notification of an Instant P...	07/
endofauction@ebay.c...	eBay Item Won! OINK Comic, #1-9 plus Preview I...	07/
endofauction@ebay.c...	eBay Item Not Sold: How To Be Abducted By Ali...	07/
endofauction@ebay.c...	eBay - Item Purchase: Edwina Hayes - Out On M...	07/
eBay Member: damian...	Re: Question for item #6549539029 - OINK Comi...	07/
eBay Member: thecroo...	Re: Message from eBay Member	06/
eBay Member: chazze...	Message from eBay Member	05/

◀ Make sure you keep on top of your emails, otherwise you could end up with some unhappy buyers

Also, it goes without saying that you'll add good-quality images and state very clearly exactly how long a buyer can expect to wait to receive the item you're selling. The clearer you are about this right from the start, the greater the chance of avoiding any hassle from somebody who believed you would be shipping the item that very same day. Add in a returns policy that's properly spelled out, and a buyer will be less inclined to take issue further down the line should a problem become apparent.

It is vital that you answer every query politely, courteously and with as much information as you can. Don't lie; be honest if you're not sure about something, and answer as quickly as possible. You may have bad news or you may need time to find an answer, but by letting people know straight away, you'll reap the rewards. Even an immediate and simple "I'm not sure – let me find out and I'll get back to you ASAP" is better than not replying or taking

AFTER SALES

This points to one of the biggest problems eBay users face: staying on top of the barrage of messages associated with trading. Even someone selling the occasional item will quickly find that a single act of selling on eBay can generate an enormous amount of email.

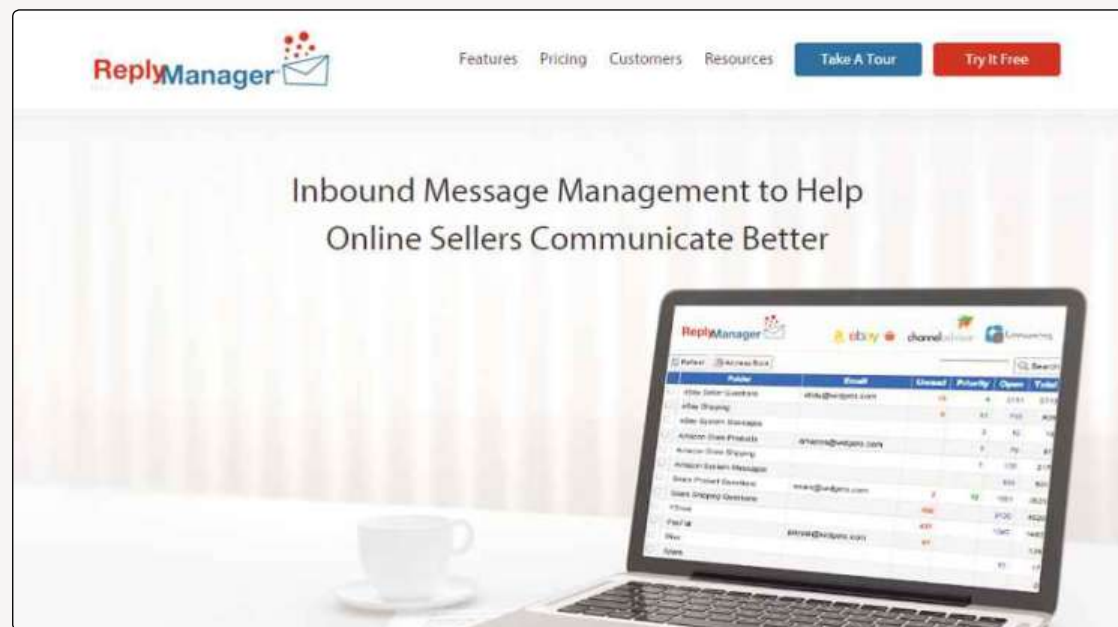
Many eBay sellers swear by Google Mail (**gmail.com**), with many opting for it because of the large

FATFINGERS

★★★★★



The FatFingers service works perfectly well, although it does rely on a pop-up window appearing, which some security software may well block. There's also an advanced search option, the chance to hunt for deals ending soon and one or two downloads.



▲ ReplyManager can take some of the hard work out of communicating with your customers

NINTENDO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



An extremely rare Nintendo game was sold for \$65,000 in February 2014. Though the cartridge was damaged, with the label ripped off and 'Mario' written on it, it contained one of only 116 copies of the game and was much sought after.

CHAPTER 4

ADVANCED SELLING



▲ If you have a tracking number for an item, make sure you pass it to your customer so they can track their purchase

storage space (more than 7GB), good anti-spam features and a powerful search which, as Google itself claims, means you never have to delete anything to stay on top of your email.

Of course, you can use other email providers such as Hotmail (hotmail.co.uk) or Yahoo (mail.yahoo.com). And if you're serious about selling, why not try Reply Manager (replymanager.com), which is free to try for 15 days and is a web-based email management tool? It will send automatic replies to customer inquiries as well as organising your inbound emails, working with accounts such as Google Mail and Yahoo. It can be expensive, however, with prices starting at \$50 a month (roughly £30) and for that you only get 50MB of storage. There's also a one-off fee of \$150 to get you started.

No matter what system you choose, it's how you use it that matters. We've already stated the importance of responding; if you send people emails and never get a reply, odds are you will feel quite disgruntled and so will your customers. You need to be proactive too; if you have an item ready to ship but you're having a problem getting it to the post office within the promised time, let your customer know. If you've sold an item that you don't have available at that time, then give them an estimated time of arrival. Don't leave them hanging and wondering where their item is.

Indeed, if you use a courier to ship an item and are able to get a tracking number, let your customer

know what it is. This way they can quickly find out when their package is set to arrive, and it takes away some of the pressure on you.

Of course, you don't want to ship out an item until it's been paid for, so if a buyer is late with his or her payment, then contact them, politely asking if they still intend to pay. If you don't hear back, write again, asking if they would like to mutually cancel the transaction. If they do, then you can file an Unpaid Item Dispute (UID) with eBay and receive a refund on your fees. Sometimes you won't get a reply from the buyer at all, in which case you can go ahead and file the UID, but don't file one without having tried to contact the buyer first, because that could lead to negative feedback.

Sometimes it pays to be generous, however, especially if you're serious about setting up an eBay business. A small card apologising for a late delivery or a simple, inexpensive gift thrown in to make up for a delay can go a long way to appeasing an otherwise annoyed customer. If you have other stock, you could think about throwing in a discount on their next purchase. This will encourage them to buy something else from you, and it also shows them the value of their custom.

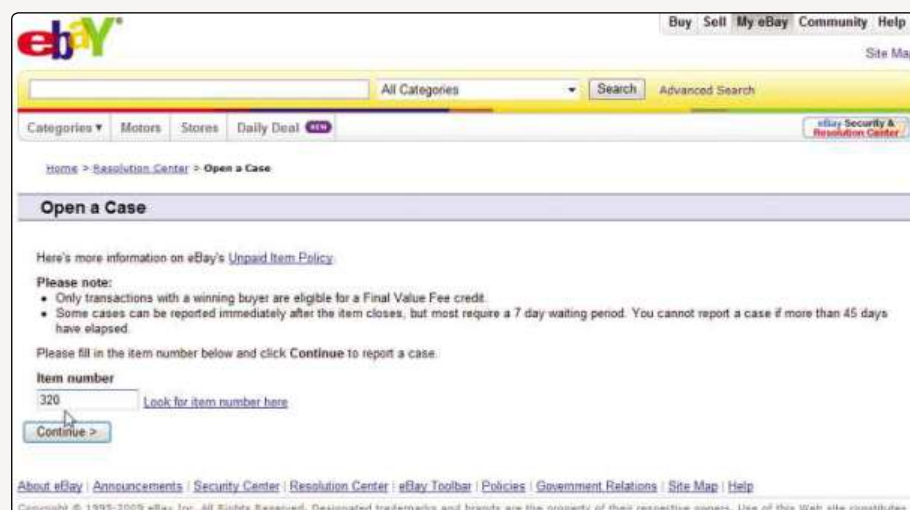
One thing you also want to do is offer good after-sales service. People want to feel secure in the knowledge that, even after they've received an item, they can still go back to you if they have a problem, so

DID YOU KNOW?

eBay's employees get to literally work inside eBay categories. The seven buildings that make up eBay's head offices in San Jose, California, are named after listings categories: Collectables, Jewelry, Motors, Music, Sports, Technology and Toys.



▲ Consider sending surveys to your buyers to gauge their satisfaction with your service



◀ If a buyer doesn't pay you, then you can open a dispute with eBay, but make sure you try to contact the other party first to get their side of the story

have a set of cards or letters printed that include your telephone number or email address, and include them with every order. Make them as personal as possible so that buyers will feel they're dealing with a real person, and include on these cards or letters a pleasant note asking them to get in touch without hesitation if they have an issue. This shows that communication is both ways, and it will hopefully prevent a buyer from posting a negative comment without having contacted you first.

Indeed, you may want to actively encourage buyers to post feedback. One good thing about this is that when a buyer leaves positive feedback, you can effectively tick off that particular transaction. Feedback also allows you to improve; you may even want to go beyond eBay and send buyers a survey (try

SurveyMonkey.com). This will inspire confidence and trust in you from purchasers, since they will see you as someone that's keen to improve their service. If you place a link to the survey on your eBay listing page, you'll be able to hammer that message home right from the start.

FEEDBACK

Finally, hold fire on leaving feedback. Although you're unable to post negative feedback against poor buyers, you can withhold positives. Therefore, wait until you get positive feedback. Most buyers will want to boost their feedback numbers, so will be more inclined to try to get good feedback from you by posting a positive account of your transaction rather than risk not getting any feedback from you at all.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

RUSSIAN TEST SPACE SHUTTLE



The Russian Bor-5 VKK test space shuttle was once sold for \$2 million but was later auctioned on eBay. It wasn't sold because its reserve wasn't met. Bidding ended at just \$25,200 plus \$5,000 delivery.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

NAME THAT BEER!

A Texas microbrewer auctioned off the rights to name one of its new beers. Brock Wagner of the St Arnold Brewing Company did so to raise money for expensive machinery.

CHAPTER 4

ADVANCED SELLING

Coping With Increasing eBay Sales

If your eBay business takes off, it's cause for celebration - but there are things to keep in mind, too

With an established, organised eBay shop, you're well situated to start growing your business. The most obvious way to do that is to offer more items for sale. By expanding your selection of merchandise and adding new categories of goods, you can drive your small shop toward the medium or high sales leagues.

Is that always a good idea, though? Are there any pitfalls to avoid? And is there help available to aid in expanding your shop listings?

THE PROS

Exposure: The main advantage of listing lots of items is the increased exposure it grants. The wider the range of products you have on offer, the greater the chance of catching a potential buyer's attention.

For example, you may enjoy a thriving business in men's ties, with your best-selling item being 100% silk styles, although in limited colour choices and a few traditional patterns. Anyone searching for 'ties' or 'silk' or even 'menswear' or 'men's accessories' is likely to find you. However, run out of your leading product one month and sales slump, leaving you struggling to recover in

following months. If you add socks, belts and wallets to your inventory, you'll reach a much wider audience seeking those items. When they click into your shop, they'll see your popular silk-tie line and may add to their sock order. Even if they only buy socks, you're still ahead. A new customer has put that all-important, albeit virtual, first foot through your door.

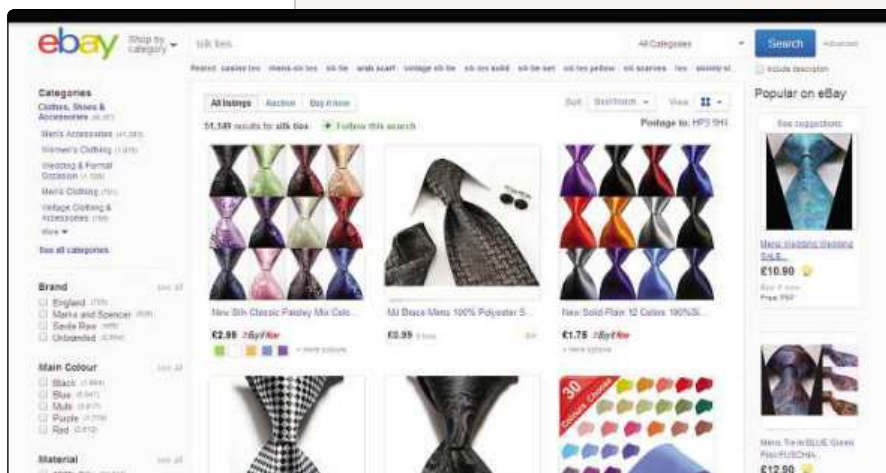
Discounts: Widen the variety of items in your shop through wholesale purchases with the same supplier, and you'll likely be entitled to volume discounts. Check your supplier's discount schedules and ask about lower rates to evaluate new merchandise in addition to your usual orders, and watch for any special offer items you can audition. Deeply discounted sale items added to your shop listings will earn you maximum extra profits with minimal risk.

THE CONS

Space: More inventory requires more space. If you're selling 'virtual' goods (electronic books and the like) or services, floor space isn't a consideration. For anything else, you'll need room to store your inventory until it's sold. If your current shop is under-utilising existing space, you'll be able to stock more items without worry. However, if you're already encroaching into non-work areas, and the dining room table, chairs and half a settee are overflowing with items, space – or the lack of it – is a high priority.

Capital: More items in your inventory requires more money. The more items you offer for sale, the more you'll pay or owe your suppliers. Also, more fees will be due to eBay. Increasing stock is always a gamble; you'll have the potential to sell and earn more, but it's never guaranteed.

Expanding listings in a shop that's already floundering may doom it to failure. You could easily over-extend yourself financially, and the damage may be difficult to recover from.



▲ Item searches steer buyers to your shop

Workload: The main goal of more stock is, ultimately, more sales. However, with it comes an increase in the time and effort required to reach that end.

Any successful business needs a fair bit of work in pre-sales areas like marketing and post-sales labours like bookkeeping and banking – all the while keeping an eye on everything else in between. Adding many listings to a flourishing small business may be the act that ruins it, with too much time taken from family or personal pleasures and the added stresses of bigger business worries.

THE BALANCE

It looks as though the cons outweigh the pros. Surely there's a happy medium or no one would start or grow a business.

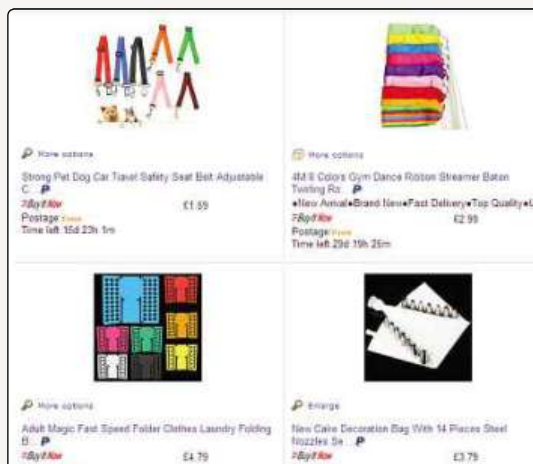
The key is in balance, finding ways to recognise and minimise the downsides. And the best way to prevent problems is with planning.

Measuring Up: When you opened your eBay shop you probably thought about how and where you would store things. Now, in considering listing even more things, you need to take a closer look at the space you have available. Will it be adequate for your needs? At what point will it become insufficient? Do you have family or friends nearby that can share for free or at low cost, clean, secure, always accessible space to store your stock? Would travelling there be more hassle than any added sales are worth?

Renting commercial, contracted space is a move that should only be considered by shops and sellers who have enjoyed substantial profits for well over a year or two. All others should be like goldfish, limiting their growth to the physical space that they possess. Committing to a long-term expense in untested waters is a sink-or-swim affair, best avoided until it becomes the only option.

Controlling Cash: Everyone's familiar with the entrepreneurial cliché 'It takes money to make money', and there's no arguing with that. There is great potential in offering more items to increase sales and profits, but how do you know just how big a leap to take into unknown territory? A good, established method is to stock about a month's worth of goods at a time. Research what amount of products similar eBay shops sell in a week and order roughly four times that much.

That gives you a few weeks' grace period to reorder if sales are better than you expected, while your out-of-pocket outlay is a maximum of a few weeks' worth of inventory if sales are sluggish.



▲ Listing lots of items requires more pages, pictures and category classifications

For this to work, you need to be very familiar with your suppliers and know they're reliable and can supply stock quickly.

If your shop has never enjoyed brisk sales, and you suspect you'd do better selling entirely different items, replace your current items rather than adding to unpopular products. Shove your slow-moving items into auctions to clear unwanted inventory and make room for new goods.

Be prepared for the added incidental expenses of per-item listing fees and extra packaging materials should your newly listed items prove popular. Be realistic, rather than begrudging, about fees. For many sellers, listing fees will be comparable to the cost of other advertising avenues such as Google AdWords. Consider the cost of listing fees a form of advertising investment and they become a much more tolerable business expense.

Taking Stock Of Yourself: When deciding if expanding your product line will be worth the added time and work, take a good look at yourself. Are you the type who excels under stress? Or do you want a business that takes 40 hours per week of your time and not a minute more? Will adding 50 new items and the potential email enquiries, order fulfilment, feedback activity and possible complaints or returns for each make you 50 times happier or 50 times more stressed?

If you welcome the extra work, how much are you willing to do before needing to hire help? That could be the solution to reclaiming your social life, if you can trust someone else to do the work the way you want it done. At the end of the day, there's no rule that states you need to keep growing. Take small steps and you'll find the ideal shop inventory size for you.

WEBSITE REVIEW

RATE EBAY

www.rateebay.com



This one's a bit pointless, but it might be useful if you need to vent somewhere. Basically, Rate eBay is a site that turns the eBay rating system onto the site itself. Thus, you're encouraged to go along and give feedback as to how well you think eBay has been doing its job.

To save you a visit, at the time we checked the site out again, eBay was coming out of it very badly. Just 7.3% of ratings left for it were positive – users gave it, on average, one and a half star (while Amazon got three and a half stars!)

It's a crude indicator, but it does suggest that the popularity of eBay among its regular userbase is dwindling. Sadly, the comments left at Rate eBay are generally of little constructive use at all, and the same could be said of the site itself.

CHAPTER 4

ADVANCED
SELLING

Dealing With Disputes

It's a sad fact that sometimes will argue about purchases. The good news is eBay has a system to deal with it

In an ideal world, there would be no disputes on eBay. You'd describe your item fully on the listing, the buyer would pay quickly, you'd send the item out properly packaged, it'd arrive promptly and everyone would be happy.

Sadly, that's not always the way it goes. Even if you handle your sales as well as you can, things can go wrong. Sometimes, something might happen in your life that means you can't get to the post office as quickly as you'd hoped. Sometimes, things get lost or damaged in the post. Sometimes, the buyer didn't understand what he or she was buying. And sometimes, very occasionally, you might encounter someone who just doesn't want to pay you for your item and causes problems after the transaction has been completed.

If your buyer is unhappy, they might open a case against you with eBay, and you'll need to work through how to handle it with them.

COMMUNICATE

The first thing you should always do when dealing with problems on eBay is communicate with your buyer. You should do this by using eBay's messaging service, which means there's a record of all your communications; don't be tempted to take it to a separate email.

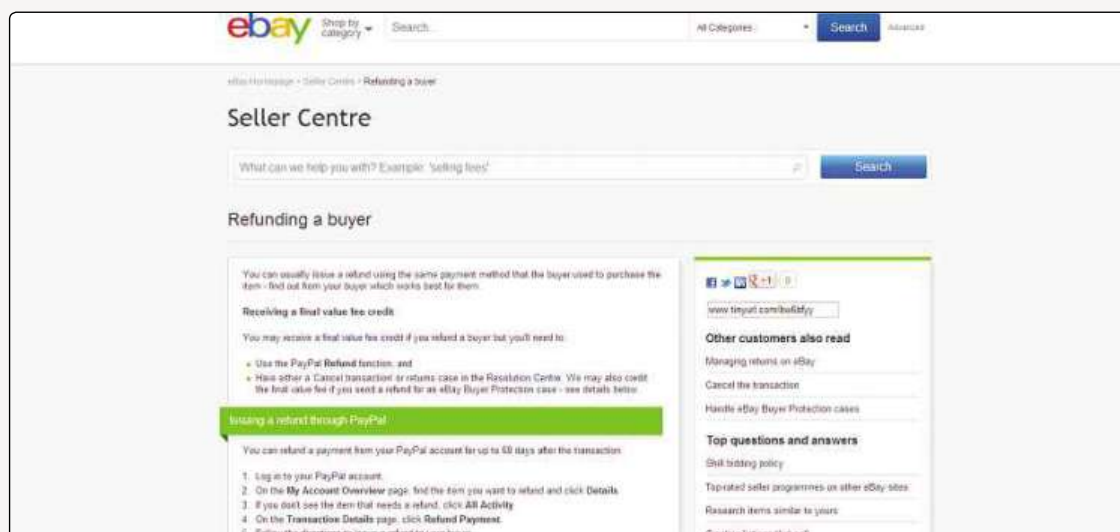
If an item is going to be delayed for some reason, you could let the buyer know ahead of time – if they feel like they know what's going on, they're less likely to get

stressed about it. Also, be apologetic if something's taking longer than expected; it never hurts.

If a buyer has contacted you to say their item hasn't turned up, and you have already posted it, you can ask them to wait a bit longer and see if it arrives. However, be prepared to offer a refund if it never does arrive. Your sold items are your responsibility while they're in transit, so it'll be up to you to make it right. If you have more than one of the item, you might want to offer to send a replacement. Depending on how you sent the item, if you have proof of postage, you should be able to claim compensation from the Post Office – again, this is your responsibility, not the Post Office's.

Although buyers might get angry when their stuff hasn't arrived, do be polite and friendly at all times. Getting angry in return won't help and can make the situation more fraught. Being nice should make the buyer more polite too.

If the buyer is complaining about the item being different to what they expected, you'll have to discuss it with them and potentially admit that you're in the wrong. Check your original listing. Did you make a note of any defects there might be, and did the photographs you used show the item as it really is? If it was misleading, the buyer might be justified in complaining. Otherwise, you can show them where you mentioned any flaws in your listing, and apologise if they were confused.



▲ eBay's Seller Centre offers advice on how and when you should issue a refund

▲ You might need to open a case against a buyer yourself if they don't cough up!

ESCALATION

Buyers who still aren't happy, even after you've talked to them, will escalate their cases and get eBay's customer services department involved. You'll be notified, and eBay will give you eight days to respond. If you don't, Customer Support will get involved. As many sellers have found out over the years, eBay tends to side with buyers in any dispute over items that don't arrive or aren't as described, so if it comes to it, it will tell you to issue a refund. Try to sort things out with your buyer before things get to this stage. If a case is opened against you, funds in your PayPal account may be put on hold until the case is resolved, which could be seriously inconvenient.

REFUNDS

If you agree with your buyer to give them a refund, you should issue that in the same way that the buyer originally paid you. If they used PayPal, it's fairly straightforward: in 'My Account Overview', click 'Refund Payment' for the transaction in question and follow the instructions on screen. The money should be returned immediately.

If a case has been opened against you in the Resolution Centre, you'll have to issue the refund through the Resolution Centre. If you agree to give them a refund and don't process it within three days, eBay will do it for you, assuming there's enough money in your PayPal account. Otherwise, it'll send you a reminder, and eventually it might refund the buyer directly, then chase you for the balance.

Depending on the circumstances, you could choose to offer the buyer a partial refund. That might happen if the item is not quite as they expected or got damaged in transit. Once you offer the buyer a partial refund, they have ten days to accept or refuse your offer.

Remember, through all of this conflict resolution process, you ultimately need to try to make the buyer

happy. If they're not satisfied, they can leave you negative feedback, which will reduce your feedback score and look bad to future potential customers.

UNPAID ITEMS

Of course, as a seller you also might need to file a dispute against a buyer. That'll only really happen if they commit to buy an item from you but never send their payment. If that happens, you can open a case against them. Go to the Resolution Centre (resolutioncentre.ebay.co.uk) and click the relevant radio button to start opening a case.

You have 32 days from the time the listing ends to open a case, and if the buyer doesn't respond or pay within four days, the case can be closed. You won't get your money, but eBay will refund your Final Value Fees, and you can relist the item.

As a seller, you can't leave negative feedback for buyers, as eBay brought in a new policy to stop retaliatory feedback loops on the site. However, in 2012, after complaints from lots of sellers about buyers acting unreasonably and dishonestly, eBay did bring in a reporting system. If you're dealing with a buyer who made unreasonable demands, who left inappropriate feedback, didn't pay or abused the returns policy, you can send eBay a report. In the feedback section, pick the 'Report a buyer' option, and write a full report of everything that went wrong. You can include screenshots, if necessary – for example, if a buyer sends you rude emails.

Once you've submitted a report, eBay will investigate within a week and, if necessary, it'll take action. That might just mean emailing the buyer to tell them how they should conduct themselves on the site, or it could mean suspending their account entirely. eBay won't always tell sellers what's going on, due to data protection laws, but it does take reports seriously.



Chapter 5

Buying On eBay

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Finding Your Dream Item On eBay

Let's take a look at eBay from a buyer's perspective now. What should you do if you're looking to pick up a bargain or two?

To bag an eBay bargain, you first have to find it. The ubiquitous eBay 'Search' box can yield an impractically long and unfocused list of results. Filtering out inappropriate auctions – and sellers – is essential to good eBaying...

SEARCHING BY TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

By default, eBay searches only in the short title description of auction items. Therefore, if the search word you enter only exists in the description of an auction, that auction will not appear in your search results – and it could, of course, be just the item you're looking for.

However, you can click on Advanced Search at the top of the screen, and then you can tick the 'Include title and description' box and repeat the search.

With descriptions included, search results may multiply alarmingly, frequently on account of sellers who practise keyword spamming (we'll be talking about that a little later) in their listings.

You can narrow down your search by adding extra keywords (such as 'walnut cupboard' instead of 'cupboard'), but this may remove as many interesting and valid auctions as 'spam' auctions. A better approach is to use the search commands that eBay provides in its search facility.

USING CATEGORIES

One obvious way to streamline bloated search results is to select an appropriate category from the drop-down menu next to the search box, at the top of your results page.

Unfortunately, many eBay listings remain miscategorised; a very rare and sought-after DVD, for instance, may end up being put in Entertainment Memorabilia instead of the DVD category. Adding extra categories to an auction listing costs the seller more, so they may not bother to do so. The item might also comprise part of a lot of diverse items or be miscategorised by mistake, so you should use this feature with care.

LOCAL VERSUS GLOBAL

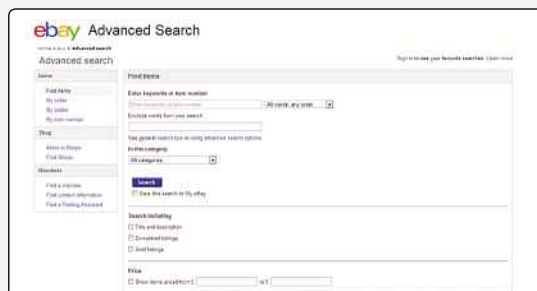
More than 150 countries participate in eBay, but search results from ebay.co.uk will not automatically include listings from non-UK auctions (unless the sellers have specifically included the UK as a target market for their item).

There are good reasons to begin your search 'locally': items won may arrive quicker, affordable courier services are available for larger items and you may be able to pay for your win by cheque, postal order or Nochex as well as PayPal. You can also search for items within a certain distance from where you live, which means you can pick them up in person if the seller agrees.

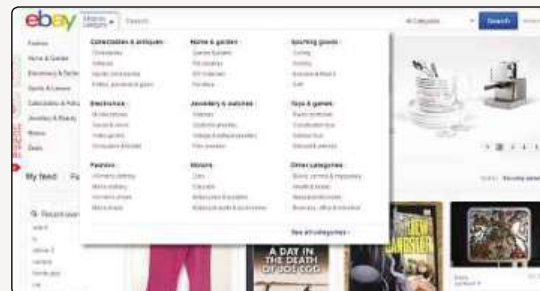
However, the UK is a relatively small marketplace, with a price levy often reflected in eBay auctions and associated postal costs that can often dwarf overseas shipping tariffs for smaller items. Even with international shipping, your item may be available cheaper abroad or may never have been available here (such as rare editions in the fields of music, movies, books and magazines).

DID YOU KNOW?

23-year-old Jeremiah Mondello of Oregon was jailed for four years for selling counterfeit Adobe software on eBay. Mondello used a series of fake identities for the auctions.



▲ Searching in the description can reward you with more results



▲ The categories can help narrow down results

BIDDING ON ITEMS FROM NON-UK SELLERS

You can include worldwide sellers in your eBay searches, but there are special considerations to take into account when bidding on auctions not in the UK.

Delivery: Will the seller deliver to the United Kingdom? Check the item's 'Postage and packaging' section; if you can click on 'United Kingdom' in the drop-down list, the seller will ship here and has provided a price. If not, check the listing itself; it may provide information as to where the seller is willing to ship their item. Otherwise, you can use the 'Ask a question' link to ask about the possibility and cost of shipping to the UK.

Payment: If you don't want to use PayPal or have an account with it, how can an item you've won be paid for? Wire transfer services such as Western Union and Moneygram are not permitted at eBay, while international money orders can be costly and might not be acceptable to the seller in question. Sending currency-exchanged cash in the post is against eBay regulations, and it's unwise anyway,



▲ Remember to check the shipping costs if buying from abroad

because it leaves you with no redress in disputes over payment and delivery. Shortly, we'll see how to limit worldwide eBay search results to sellers that accept PayPal.

The Language Barrier: eBay will warn you if you're sending a question to a seller from a non-English-speaking part of eBay. Unless you speak the seller's language, try to keep all communications brief; the responsibility rests with you if you fall foul of terms, conditions or information that were explained in a listing (or correspondence) you couldn't understand.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

CHINESE BABIES

An auction on eBay's Chinese site, called Eachnet, was investigated by police on suspicion of child trafficking. The listing offered baby boys at 28,000 yuan (\$3,450) and girls at 13,000 yuan (\$1,603). The auction was quickly removed.

eBay Search Commands

Aim	Method	Example
Exclude several keywords from a search	Put a minus sign after your keyword and then a list of comma-separated words in brackets. There must be no space after each comma OR Add each excluded word after your search term preceded by a dash (-) There must be a space between each 'excluded' term and no space between the dash and the word it is excluding	Genesis -(sega,bible,trek,manga,snorkel) OR Genesis -sega -bible -trek -manga -snorkel
Find an exact phrase	Put the words in full quotes (")	"New Order"
Find at least one of two (or more) words	Group the comma-separated words in parentheses (no spaces after the comma)	(hammer,nails,screwdriver) Will return search results containing any of the above words.
Find auctions containing words that begin with a certain sequence of letters	Append an asterisk (*) to the search-term	record* Will find auctions containing 'record', 'records', 'recorder', 'recording', etc.
Find auctions with a specific spelling of a search term	Enclose the word in quotations (")	"record" Will exclude auctions containing 'records' in title or description.
Find two (or more) words without 'auto-expanding' search results	Enclose a possible category word in quotations (")	If one of your keywords is recognised by eBay as pertaining to an eBay category, your search may be 'automatically expanded' to search for the remaining words in that category. For example, the search 'Bruce Willis DVD' may 'auto-include' irrelevant results in the DVD category that contain 'Bruce' or 'Willis' – e.g. Bruce Almighty. The search 'Bruce Willis "DVD"' will only return pertinent results that actually contain the word 'DVD'.

CHAPTER 5

BUYING THROUGH EBAY



▲ Seek out misspelled bargains at fatfingers.co.uk

Online translation services such as Babelfish (babelfish.yahoo.com) and Google Translate (translate.google.com) can help when dealing with foreign sellers, but they don't cover all possible languages. They're also best used for short and simple phrases, because they often produce muddled results that could make matters worse.

Mindful of these caveats, foreign-language eBay auctions can be a good opportunity to find sought-after items with fewer competing bidders. Simply run your translated keyword through an online translation service and do a 'rest of the world' search.

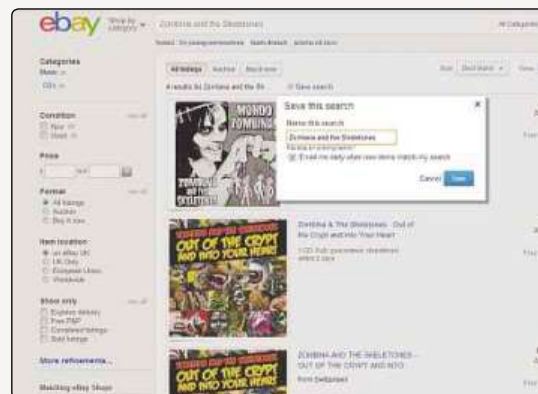
TYPO BARGAINS

Sometimes sellers mistype (or just don't know how to spell) a word when placing a listing on eBay; the resultant 'nonsense' word (for example, 'cuboard' instead of 'cupboard') will probably never end up in a bidding war – or even in search results. You can take advantage of the low visibility of auctions such as this by hunting out typos and misspelt words when searching for items.

Many sites offer eBay typo searches, where you can search eBay directly for a wide range of possible misspellings. Two of the most popular are www.fatfingers.co.uk and www.typozay.co.uk (which even offers search plug-ins for users of the Firefox web browser). Check out the reviews section at the back of this book for more examples.



▲ Apply search commands naturally



▲ Saved searches remember all your custom search options, and results can be emailed to you daily

ADVANCED SEARCH

Power bidders and buyers belong on the 'Advanced Search' page, where you can broaden your search results to include sellers worldwide and specify many other options to focus your search and zero in on a potential bargain.

To get started, click on the 'Advanced Search' link to the right of the search box at the top of your results or go to search.ebay.co.uk.

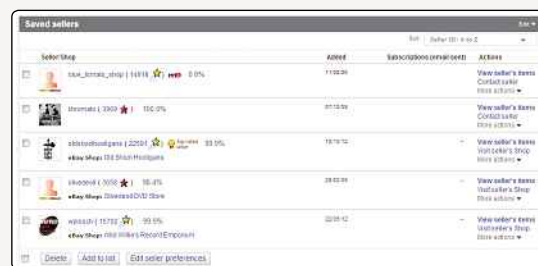
SEARCH COMMANDS

At the top of Advanced Search, you can apply some of the search commands that we came across earlier without needing to use any of the special formatting (see 'eBay Search Commands' table).

View Ended Auctions: The 'completed listings' checkbox enables you to search for auctions that have finished. This is a useful indicator of prices you can expect to pay for items you're currently seeking. It's also a good way to locate sellers who are suitable for you but may not currently be offering any items.



▲ The 'Advanced Search' link



▲ You can add sellers to your favourites list

▲ Search the whole world if you like

▲ Find a local bargain on eBay with Advanced Search

Save The Search: Saved searches are a useful way of repeating an advanced search at a later date. You can save your custom search by ticking the 'Save this search to My eBay' option in Advanced Search or with the 'Save this search' link near the top of your results.

Saved searches have their own section in My eBay, and you can subscribe to them, receiving the initial ten results from any saved search by daily email.

Specify A Price Range: In the 'Items Priced' boxes, you can place minimum and maximum prices for item listings.

The 'minimum price' option is particularly useful for excluding the thousands of worthless 'one cent' auctions that some unscrupulous sellers employ to boost their own reputations.

▲ Using Advanced Search, you can even specify exactly how much you want to pay for the thing you're looking for

▲ eBay wish lists let you keep track of things you're planning to buy

Specify Sellers: If you're looking for items from a particular eBay seller, you can type in their eBay User ID here (you'll need to know exactly what it is). You can also use the 'Exclude' option in the drop-down box to make sure that a particular seller's items don't appear in your results. Currently, you can only 'blacklist' one seller per search in this way.

If you've built up a list of favourite sellers (see 'Other search methods'), you can also specify to search their auctions only.

Include The World!: Here, finally, we can search beyond the UK by selecting 'Worldwide' from the drop-down list in the 'Location' section.

The 'Items located in' section lets you specify a geographical location for the item. You can choose any country that eBay deals with from the drop-down list, but this is most useful when seeking UK-based items.

If you want to include foreign listings from only those sellers who explicitly ship to the UK, leave the 'Items available to' drop-down list at 'United Kingdom', but be aware that you exclude many UK-friendly foreign sellers by doing so.

OTHER OPTIONS IN ADVANCED SEARCH

- Find PayPal-listed items only.
- Find Buy It Now items only (no bidding necessary).

◀ Refine your search

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

PAINTINGS BY A TURTLE



Koopa the turtle 'painted' by crawling over the canvas, spreading blobs of colour. His owner put one of the last two paintings he ever did before he 'retired' on eBay. It raised \$1,025.

CHAPTER 5

BUYING THROUGH EBAY



▲ Add notes to your wishlist to save them for later

- Find items that are located near you (the United Kingdom version – you gave eBay your postcode when you signed up).
- Find items with free postage and packaging.
- Find items that have a minimum and/or maximum number of existing bids.

THE SIDEBAR

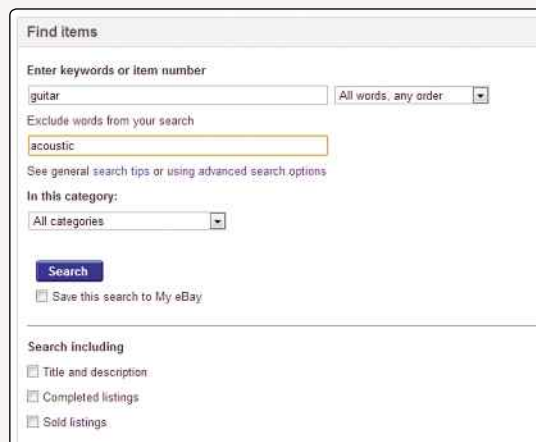
eBay displays a Search Options sidebar to the left of search results. Here you can refine your search using both the advanced options and search terms specific to the thing you're searching for. If you're looking for clothing, for example, you can narrow results down by brand or material, as well as clicking to only see results within the UK or in brand new condition.

At the bottom of the search bar, you'll see a link to 'More refinements', which lets you get even more specific. Since eBay is such a massive marketplace, this could be invaluable.

OTHER SEARCH METHODS

Wish Lists: eBay lets you save items you like for later, by adding them to a wishlist. When you go back into your wishlist via My eBay, you can click the 'View similar items' to find more of the same kind of thing.

Favourite Sellers: You can add any seller or eBay shop to your Favourite Sellers list simply by



▲ Excluding certain words will make your searches more specific

clicking the 'Add to favourite sellers' link in their profile. eBay can optionally send you regular emails with new listings from your favourite sellers, who also have their own page in My eBay where you can find them again easily and even add notes about them.

Seller Communication: Whether you've won or lost an auction at eBay, why not get in touch with the seller and let them know if you're looking for something specific? Serious sellers will be glad to have a ready-made potential buyer for new listings.

IS IT CHEAPER ELSEWHERE?

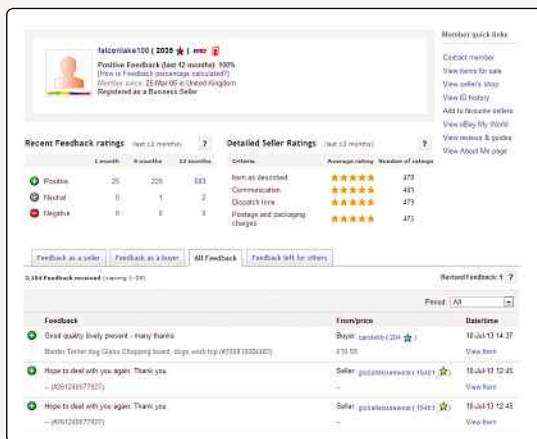
Check the regular commercial outlets for your item before going to eBay. Are you sure that special edition DVD you're after isn't also available on Play or Amazon, only brand new and cheaper than the lowest eBay price?

CHECKING SELLER FEEDBACK BEFORE BIDDING

Every time an item sells, people have the chance to leave feedback about a seller. Feedback can be positive, negative or neutral, and it can also

DID YOU KNOW?

When selling, it's best to start your auction as low as possible. This encourages buyers to bid, and when they've bid once, they're more likely to bid again.



▲ The feedback system has been a vital part of eBay's success



▲ Check out all of a seller's negative feedback at a glance at Toolhaus.org

be withdrawn by mutual agreement. We've covered it in more depth elsewhere in this guide. The total number of items sold and bought by the seller is displayed in brackets next to their name in the item's listing. Click on it to go to their Feedback Profile.

The Positive Feedback percentage is the seller's reputation. If it's below 98%, then it's worth considering whether you want to do business with them. However, this is modified by how many total sales and purchases are represented. You can check for both positive and negative feedback up to 12 months or you can also input the user's ID at **www.toolhaus.org** to see a full listing of their negatives.

QUALITY OF FEEDBACK

Check one or two of the 'View Item' links in the seller's Feedback Profile. Many eBayers boost their reputation by buying 'one cent' lots that automatically grant positive feedback; such auctions are selling good reputation in volume.

Certain sellers also manage to maintain more than one eBay account with the intention of 'selling' feedback to themselves. This trick is easy to spot with a little investigation of a Feedback Profile: look for numerous low-value items from the same seller, often digital goods such as 'guides' in PDF and Microsoft Word format. Some of these practices have been clamped down on by eBay, however.

CHANGED IDENTITY

eBay users can change their User ID, and if your seller has done this, then a symbol will appear next to their name.

Feedback is carried over from the old ID, but an auction where the seller is in the process of switching identity could mean that they're trying to start over at eBay. Why? Tucked away in the 'View more options' drop-down menu in the Feedback



▲ At the time, Toy Story 3 was barely into cinemas. Pirated goods like this are likely to be poor quality

Profile screen is the 'View ID History' option, which will quickly reveal any identity changes.

THE REAL DEAL

There is no guaranteed method to identify fake goods across all listings in eBay, since signs of bad faith vary greatly across types of items. However, here are some considerations:

- If it's too good to be true, then it probably isn't true, particularly for Buy It Now items. Maybe a scorned wife really is selling her husband's Porsche for a dollar, but avoid items listed at significantly below market value.
- Does the listing have a generic picture that you've seen before? eBay supplies stock images for DVDs, CDs and certain other types of listings to sellers, but a 'domestic' picture of the item listed is a more encouraging sign, although it's not an infallible mark of authenticity.
- Does the listing explicitly state what the item is? You could be bidding on the very picture you're examining, rather than the item it displays! The devil is in the details, and nothing protects you better than a careful reading of the listing.

Boosting profits by overcharging for postage is known as 'scalping', and the 'Postage and packaging' section in each item listing should state clearly what you'll pay to have the item sent to you. If it doesn't, check the listing, and use the 'Ask a question' link to ascertain exact postal charges if necessary. If the seller is vague in response, pin them down, and if they won't specify an exact cost, don't bid.

Use the 'Customise view' link in your search results to add 'Shipping costs' to your search results (although they should be displayed by default). While not all items will be able to display their cost in the shipping costs column, it will help you eliminate most scalpers at a glance.



▲ Check the ID history of an eBay user to see how many times they've changed their name

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

A HUMAN KIDNEY



You only need one kidney, so a Florida man tried to sell his spare on eBay. Unfortunately for him, selling human organs is illegal and against eBay's rules. Steve Westly, eBay's Vice President of Marketing, said, "eBay has zero tolerance for illegal items on the site." He added that "We have a very clear policy against this."

Smart Bidding And Good Buying

When and how you bid on an item can make all the difference. We look at how you can increase your chances

So you've found your item; now it's time to bid and win it. However, there are some tricks to master before the item is in your hands and all parties are leaving positive feedback for each other.

SNIPING

Waiting until the last few minutes – or seconds – of an auction to place your bid is known as 'sniping'. Last-minute bidding gives your rivals no chance to bid higher, but this technique cannot defeat a bidder whose secret top bid is higher than yours. The best way to ensure a win is to bid as much as you're willing to pay for the item. If you lose, it will usually be by a much higher margin than it appears, as eBay augments bids in small increments, and all top bids are secret until outbid. The top bid of a winner is known only to them.

ODD BIDS

Most eBayers place bids in rounded-off amounts, but sometimes you really can win an auction by a margin of a few pennies, so make your bids in odd amounts such as £11.67 or £7.89.

SILENT RUNNING

The more attention an auction receives, the more likely a costly bidding war is – great for the seller,

not so great for you. A listing has three possible 'attracting forces': a bidder, a hit counter (if the seller has put one in the listing) and the number of people who add the listing to their 'watch' list in order to monitor the auction's progress.

The hit counter is usually visible to all, but only the seller knows how many people are 'watching' the item; if sufficient 'watchers' gather, the seller may be encouraged to augment the listing and attempt to attract further buyers. The only safe way to track a listing without hiking up the hit counter or adding to the number of 'watchers' is to chase it through the ever-shifting pages of the search results through which you found the item in the first place. If you bookmark the listing and check it regularly, your own 'hit' is counted once a day.

However, nothing can turn an unnoticed listing into a frantic bidding war more effectively than when it's bid on very early in its run. Many eBayers search for items based on the existing number of bids, so even if you're not planning to 'snipe', don't bid on an item too early.

EBAY FEVER

When an item you've been seeking for years suddenly shows up on eBay, it's surprisingly easy to ignore all preceding advice and get caught up in the excitement. If you bid (or buy) recklessly, you can end up with an overseas item that you're unable to pay for due to the seller's payment methods or for other practical reasons. The only recourse then is to contact the seller via the 'Ask a question' link, explain what happened, and offer to pay the cost of a relisting. The seller remains entitled to wait 30 days and open a dispute for non-payment, so examine alternative payment methods if possible and keep it courteous, since the fault is with you.

Retracting a bid is rarely permitted, and you're only usually allowed to withdraw substantially mistyped amounts bid (i.e. entering £1,010 instead of £10.10). A bid on eBay is a binding contract. For



▲ Choose the right option when corresponding with sellers

DID YOU KNOW?

eBay UK overtook Amazon UK to become the country's top online shopping site in the spring of 2003.

Your eBay Shopping Basket

✓ China Glaze Nail Polish Some Like It Haute (80773) was just added to your basket. [Back to last search results](#) | [Back to item page](#)

From tan-tone (41350)



China Glaze Nail Polish Some Like It Haute
(80773)
Condition: New

Quantity:

£4.95

Economy (3-4 working days) ▼
Royal Mail Tracked 48

+ £2.95

[Remove](#) | [Save for later](#)

▲ eBay's Shopping Basket

an overview of eBay's policy, see pages.ebay.co.uk/help/buy/bid-retract.html.

CORRESPONDING VIA EBAY

Corresponding with sellers outside of the eBay messaging system is ill-advised; if all your correspondence remains within eBay, you have a clear history to present in the event of dispute arbitration. Take it to email, and you're on your own. The 'Ask a question' message form has a tick-box that lets you choose to hide your email address from the recipient. This is the easiest way to keep your messages in eBay itself.

The form also has four options in a drop-down list to indicate whether your enquiry concerns payment, combined shipping for multiple items, shipping or is a general enquiry. Since you have to choose one of these options to send a message, choose the right one; a busy seller may respond more quickly if you do so.

SIDE-STEPPING EBAY

Do not approach sellers with offers outside eBay's listings system. It's against the rules, and auctions can only be ended early in unusual circumstances. If you're interested in buying similar items 'off-site' from the seller in future, they may be interested in dealing with you, but they can't cancel an auction in progress, can't privately offer you the safeguards that eBay does and would probably prefer to see someone as enthusiastic as you bidding hard against others users in a regular eBay auction!

DUPLICATE BIDDING

Do not place bids on multiple listings of the same item in the hope of winning one of them. If you win them all, you'll have to pay for them all.

UNWELCOME BIDS

Do you qualify to bid for an item? If you can't meet the seller's terms for a listing, they have the power to cancel your bid and bring down penalties

How do you find our new checkout?
Tell us what you think

Total: £7.90
[eBay Buyer Protection Learn more](#)

NEW Continue to PayPal to complete your purchase.

[Continue](#)

▲ eBay has streamlined its payment system

on you from eBay administration. These can include account suspension and loss of PowerSeller status.

Sellers can refuse bids from buyers on their 'blocked bidder' list and for many other reasons. As long as these are clearly stated in the listing itself, you'll have to respect them. Sellers may choose to 'ban' bidders who:

- Have negative feedback comments.
- Have a 'non-domestic' shipping address.
- Have received Unpaid Item Strikes in an after-sales dispute.
- Don't have a PayPal account (although this doesn't oblige the seller to use PayPal as the payment method for their listing).

Thanks for your purchase.
You will receive an email confirmation shortly.

[View order details](#)

Estimated delivery: Between Monday, Jul. 15 and Tuesday, Jul. 16

Reward points collected: 4 | [Conditions](#)

eBay Buyer Protection. [Learn more](#)

How do you like our new checkout?
Tell us what you think.
Help us to make checkout better.

Share your purchase with friends

What would you like to do next?

Go to My eBay
to see items you are watching or purchased

Go to eBay's homepage
to continue shopping and discover great deals

▲ eBay hopes you'll come back soon to buy more stuff

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

BIGFOOT EXPEDITION



A Wyoming 'big game hunter' started an eBay auction to raise funds for a trip to seek out this elusive creature. It wasn't clear what the buyers were actually bidding for, but as the starting price was \$150,000 and no one bid at all, this is pretty academic.

CHAPTER 5

BUYING THROUGH EBAY

Malicious buying is deemed by eBay to occur when a buyer:

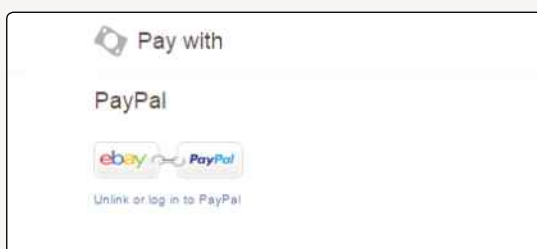
- Bids far beyond an item's value to 'prevent' serious bids and block the sale.
- Bids on multiple items from one seller with no real intent to buy.
- Bids on a seller's item after being placed on their 'blocked bidder' list.

PAYING FOR YOUR WIN

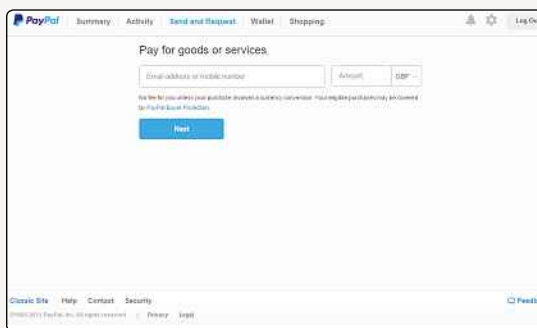
When you finally win an auction listing, you will receive two notification emails from eBay: one to confirm your win and one soliciting payment on behalf of the seller. Both will contain a big 'Pay Now' button, as will the item listing and the 'Won' page in My eBay.

Press it, and you'll be asked to select a method of payment. All sellers are required to accept PayPal, so it's likely that's what you'll be using.

You'll be asked to confirm shipping details and to add postage to the invoice if this hasn't automatically been done. Take care to input the correct postage. Postage is usually charged in the seller's native currency, but you may need to translate the agreed postage amount in order to input it (try the Universal Currency Converter at www.xe.com/ucc). You can also add an optional note to the seller at this point and change the shipping address by selecting another from your eBay Saved Addresses or adding a new one.



▲ Paying is easy if your eBay and PayPal accounts are linked



▲ Check all the details again before finalising the payment

PAYING DIRECT FROM PAYPAL

In certain circumstances – usually when you've arranged unusual terms with a foreign seller – you may find that your only options for inputting postage are inappropriate drop-down lists of 'domestic' packing rates. In this case, you'll need to contact the seller and ask them to change the automated payment procedure from their end. If this proves problematic, you can still use PayPal's Send Money feature to conclude the auction, without losing the security of an eBay acknowledgement that you've paid for your win. However, you'll need the seller's email address. The process is as follows:

- Log into your PayPal account and click the 'Send Money' tab.
- Click on 'eBay item' in the 'For...?' section and type your eBay User ID and the auction number.
- Enter the seller's email address in the 'To' field or, if you've previously dealt with the seller, select it from the drop-down list underneath.
- Enter the winning amount including postage, click 'Continue', and then confirm on the next page. The item will be acknowledged as 'paid' in My eBay.

PAYING WITHOUT PAYPAL

PayPal is an eBay subsidiary company, and using it to pay for an eBay win means that you're covered for the full transaction price plus original shipping charges through the PayPal Buyer Protection Program (see 'Damage Limitation'). Since no other eBay payment method carries this kind of guarantee, PayPal is arguably the best choice to complete auctions, and eBay is at times borderline insistent that you use it for transactions through its site.

However, PayPal has many detractors, and if you need to complete a deal by other means, the options allowed (but not necessarily endorsed) by eBay are:

- **Personal cheque:** Convenient, can be stopped if necessary (for varying fees) and is traceable.
- **Credit/debit card:** The seller may have their own checkout system, integrated (often poorly) into eBay's own payment procedures. Credit card payments additionally have varying – and limited – liability insurance for physical items. Be sure that your auction payment is acknowledged by eBay afterwards, as this fails to happen more often through bad coding than ill intent.
- **Postal orders:** Convenient but almost as transparent as cash.

DID YOU KNOW?

A study by internet ratings firm Nielsen NetRatings found visitors to eBay spent an average of one hour 11 minutes perusing goods – one of the longest times for any UK site.

- **Bank transfer:** A favourite in European transactions but involves sharing banking information with a third party. Refunds can be very problematic.
- **Banker's draft:** For higher value items; fees for issue may exceed the item's value.
- **E-check:** Slightly faster clearing than physical cheques, but if you're able to send one, you might as well use PayPal.
- **Escrow:** Only practical for higher amounts. Both parties have to be happy with the transaction before money is released – www.escrow.com.
- **Cash:** Only consider using cash if there is no other alternative – and there almost always will be! If you are collecting an item from an eBay seller, though, cash might be an acceptable payment method; if you're thinking of sending it through the post, be aware that there's a very real risk it'll get lost along the way. If you must, send the package well wrapped (with opaque lining) and by a method whereby the receiver must sign for it.

INTERNATIONAL MONEY ORDERS

Some transnational banks used to make international money orders a relatively easy option. These days, the term has little meaning, and generally sellers are actually talking about cheques from international banks that are to be specified in the seller's native currency (usually dollars). Such services are far too expensive to be practical for small wins.

LEAVING FEEDBACK

Many sections of My eBay will ask you to leave feedback on transacted auctions (and the seller will remind you if no one else does!). eBay is regularly reviewing its feedback policy, and it's covered in more detail elsewhere in this book.

DAMAGE LIMITATION

If you don't receive your item or the item is significantly different from its listing description, contact the seller about the matter in the first instance. An amicable solution is often possible, retaining goodwill and avoiding bad feedback for the seller.

One of the top causes of disputes is non-delivery, usually due to items being lost or stolen in the post. The only way to avoid this is to have them sent insured at greater expense, thus protecting both buyer and seller. Unfortunately, this can negate the 'bargain' value of eBay and, in practice, an enormous number of eBay items are consigned to the basic postal system (often of more than one country) every day. Nonetheless,

verify the address used and date of actual posting from the seller, and ensure that adequate time has been allowed for the item to arrive.

For items covered by PayPal's Buyer Protection Program, the advantage is with the buyer if an uninsured item doesn't arrive or doesn't match its listing description; you can open a dispute from My eBay within ten to 60 days of payment.

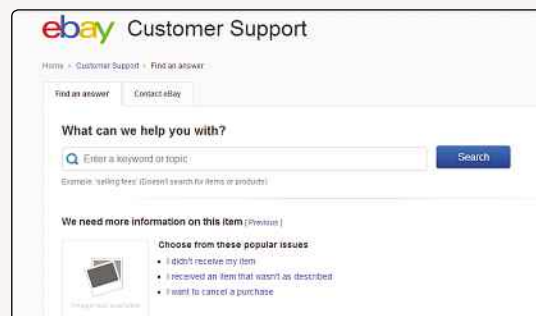
As ever, maintain any correspondence via eBay rather than email. The seller has ten days to respond, but if no satisfactory agreement is reached, you can elevate your dispute to a claim. The seller's account may be limited or even suspended if a claim is granted, and funds are usually recovered and then credited back to your PayPal account.



▲ My Summary tells you what you need to pay and leave feedback for



▲ Feedback allows you to rate and comment on other eBayers, either positively or negatively



▲ If the seller won't help you, you can open a dispute about your missing or misdescribed item

WEBSITE REVIEW

TAMEBAY

www.tamebay.com

★★★★★



By distance, one of the very best eBay resources available on the internet. Updated very regularly and packed full of the latest news, information and thoughts, this is a gold-mine of information, whether you're an experienced or novice eBay seller.

There's also a guide to assorted services, eBay tools and a lively discussion forum. Factor in the massive backlog of material to work through as well, and Tamebay remains unmissable.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

LUNCH WITH MURDOCH



Media tycoon Rupert Murdoch offered lunch with himself at News Corporation's New York headquarters, in a charity eBay auction. Bidding started at \$25,000, and the money went to a Jerusalem technology college.

CHAPTER 5

BUYING THROUGH EBAY

Daily Deals

Looking for a bargain? This is the perfect place to find them...

You already know that eBay is a great place to find bargains. However, did you know there's a whole section of eBay dedicated to limited-time offers from merchants, offering amazing prices on all kinds of things? eBay's Daily Deals section launched in the UK in 2011, and whatever you're shopping for, it's probably worth a look.

The Deals section (deals.ebay.co.uk) is full of new items, often by big name brands, being offered with massive discounts. Usually there's a time limit on these discounts or only a limited number of items available, but if you know what you're after and you're quick, you could nab something cool at a really low price.

DEALS

Launching the Deals section is part of eBay's move towards being seen as a serious, no-nonsense retailer. While eBay might have started out as a kind of online car boot sale, it's now a massive business, and while there's obviously still plenty of scope for people to sell their old stuff to new owners, eBay is now also packed with retailers taking the opportunity to expand their market. The Deals section isn't about auctions or bidding; it's about new stock being sold for pre-determined low prices.

On any given day, you might find cut-price electronics, like iPads being sold at a fraction of their usual retail price, alongside more seasonal items like summery garden furniture or must-have kids toys for

Christmas. The biggest deals are emblazoned with red banners showing how much of a saving you'll make if you buy them; some particularly exciting deals might also be flagged as 'Deal of the Day' or 'Deal of the Week'. It's very easy to get carried away while browsing the Deals section!

QUALIFYING SELLERS

While anyone can list items for sale on eBay, not every eBay seller can get involved in the Daily Deals section. Only sellers with an exemplary feedback record who sell more than 100 items a year can sign up. Every aspect of a seller's conduct on eBay has to be almost perfect: they need to have a 98% feedback rating, they need to follow all of eBay's rules and policies to the letter, they need to pay all of their fees on time, they need to have at least a 4.6 out of 5 score on every part of the detailed seller ratings, and they need to resolve any cases opened against them quickly and sensibly.

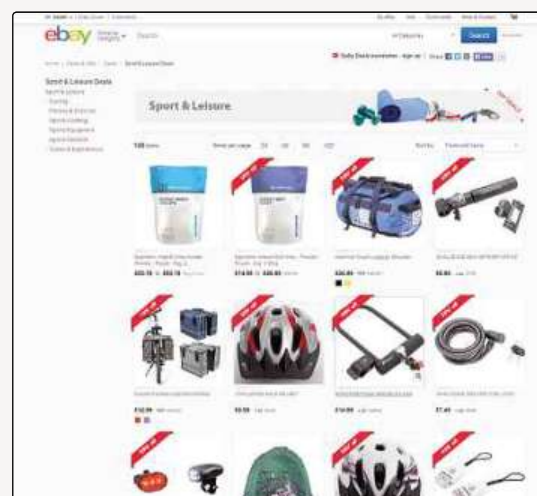
What all of that means, if you're a buyer, is that buying from the Daily Deals means you'll not only save money, but you can also expect extremely good customer service. These sellers have already proven themselves, and they'll need to keep their ratings high in order to stay in the programme, so they won't want to risk negative feedback. Most sellers tend to be big retailers or at least professional shopkeepers, which means they know the importance of treating their customers well.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the summer of 2008, UK police tried to stop the sale of ex-emergency service vehicles and uniforms. Their concern was terrorists or criminals could misuse them.



▲ This section of the site offers the biggest discounts on new items



▲ Many sellers shout about their reductions via bright red banners



▲ The eBay Deals blog might have some helpful money-saving tips for you

PARTNERSHIPS

To prove that point, within the Deals section of eBay, you'll find special offers from some very familiar names. Companies such as Argos and House of Fraser have entered into partnerships with eBay to sell their stock through the site – and at heavily discounted prices, of course.

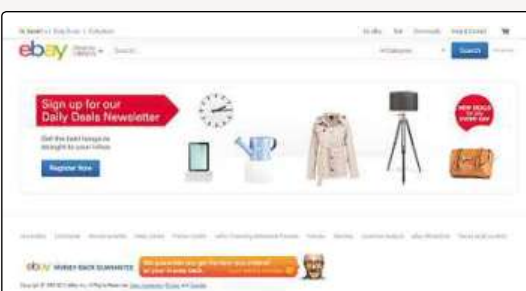
These partnerships are generally listed in the Categories list on the Deals page, and when you click through you'll be taken to a splash page for each outlet. These have been designed to match the branding of the store you're buying from, and they have sub-categories listed within them that lead to the actual items for sale. Naturally, you can search each shop, finding only items offered by those outlets.

These brands already have massive and popular websites of their own, so the fact that they think it's worth setting up secondary outlets via the eBay website is clearly indicative of just how powerful eBay has become.

BILL ME LATER

American eBayers really do get all the luck, don't they? eBay has launched a kind of credit account, attached to PayPal, which means users can choose to shop now and pay later – but it's not available in the UK yet.

Bill Me Later lets users pay with money that isn't yet in their PayPal account, without needing to use a credit card. It offers a range of financing options: users can choose to pay in full later or to spread their payments over a longer period of



▲ Sign up for the Daily Deals newsletter to hear about new deals

SUBSCRIBE

As well as listing new deals on its website, eBay also runs a newsletter and blog highlighting the best new deals on offer. You can sign up for the email newsletter from the Deals page, and then you'll get an email every day telling you about the latest and greatest new deals available. You might need to be quick off the mark if something catches your eye, though, since every other subscriber will have been alerted to the same deals as you!

The blog is slightly less useful than the email newsletter to UK eBayers, since it's mostly focused on Deals available in the US. There's nothing stopping you buying from America, but the cost of international shipping might make the deal less appealing.

The blog is divided into several subsections: Daily Deals, Tech Deals, Fashion Deals, Home Deals, Even More Deals, and Money Saving Tips. That last one is worth checking out, because it doesn't just look at specific deals that might not be available outside the US. It's actually got some interesting and potentially helpful articles on topics such as ways to increase your income or ways to save money while planning a wedding.

BAG A DEAL

Although it's a bit different from the rest of eBay, and a long way from the site's original mission, the Deals section is well worth investigating if you want to save a bit of money on buying new items. You might just come across the deal of a lifetime.

time. Only some sellers accept Bill Me Later, but many of those are the established retailers selling through the Daily Deals section.

It's not really a new idea: plenty of bricks-and-mortar stores and catalogues offer similar deals, allowing customers to buy big-ticket items without necessarily having the money to begin with (think sofas!), but it's pretty innovative of eBay to apply the same technique to its site and to PayPal. It's just a shame it's only available to a fraction of eBay's users.

DID YOU KNOW?

For security reasons, eBay users are advised to use an alpha-numeric password (that is, one containing letters and numbers), to change it regularly and to never disclose it to anyone, especially in response to emails claiming to be from eBay.

Combining Purchases From One Seller

If you're buying several items from the same seller, you could save a bundle on postage costs. Here's how

Should you purchase more than one item from a single trader, you may find that you can combine said purchases into one shipment, thus saving yourself a few pounds in the process. There are a few different ways this can be done, some of which require actually contacting the seller to ask if they can sort out combined shipping for you. For the most part, though, eBay makes combining shipping a smooth, straightforward process.

EBAY'S SHOPPING BASKET

Up until a few years ago, eBay didn't have a 'shopping basket' of the kind you'd find on Amazon or other similar online shopping sites. If you wanted to buy multiple things from the same seller, you'd either have to pay the shipping costs for each item individually or you'd have to get in touch with the seller and ask them if they could issue you with a new invoice that combined all your purchases and (usually!) a lower charge for postage and packaging. Some sellers invested in third-party software that allowed them to set up their own shopping baskets, but basically the whole thing was a lot of hassle – not the kind of easy, smooth transaction you'd expect from eBay!

Now, though, you can forget all about that because eBay has a shopping basket function. When you open the page of an item you want to buy, if there's a 'Buy It Now' option, you'll also see a button

for 'Add to Basket.' Adding something to your basket isn't the same as actually buying it; just like in the real world, you don't need to part with your cash until you get to the checkout. Adding it to your basket just saves the item for later, so you could add items from the same seller or multiple sellers and then decide later which ones you want to buy or put back on the (metaphorical) shelf.

The really clever bit, though, is that if you have multiple items from the same seller in your basket when you hit the 'Proceed to checkout' button, the sale is automatically combined. If the seller has specified that shipping can be combined, it'll all be done automatically.

GETTING IN TOUCH

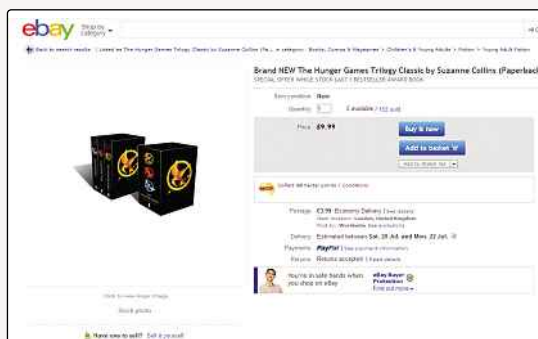
Getting your shipping costs automatically combined via the shopping basket only works if the seller has specified in his or her listings that these charges can be combined. Sometimes, you'll find that this isn't the case. eBay's shopping basket is still fairly new, so not all sellers will have got to grips with it just yet. Alternatively, depending on the item, they may not be willing or able to combine postage. Particularly bulky or unusually shaped items may be difficult to package together, and the savings on shipping might be minimal anyway.

The best thing to do, if you find that shipping isn't being combined automatically, is to drop the seller a line and ask them if they could possibly combine it for you. It's easy to contact the seller: open up your 'My eBay' page and you'll see a list of your recent purchases. Next to each one is a link that says 'Contact seller'. Click on that and you'll see you can send the seller a message specifically about combined shipping.

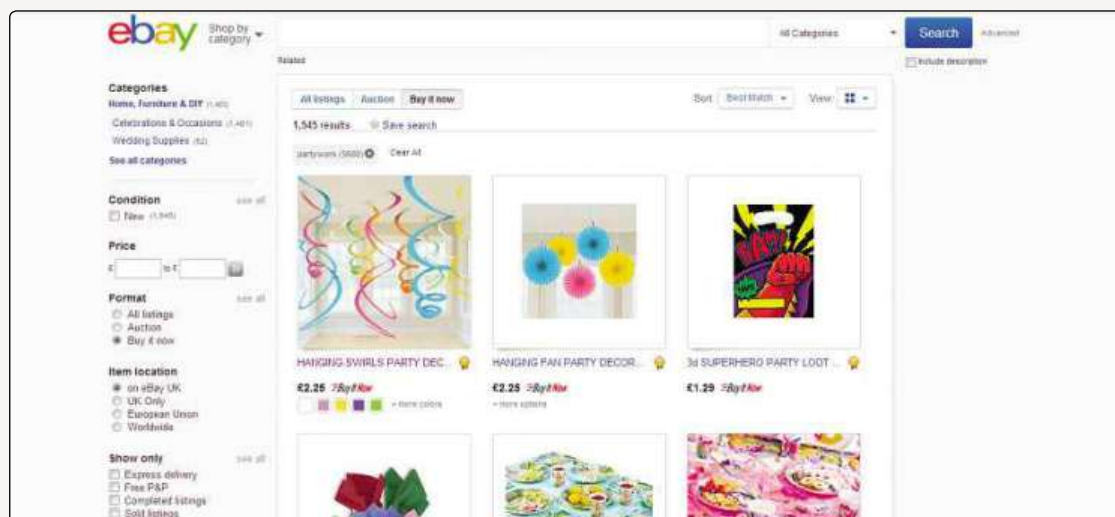
As always, communication with sellers is best handled through eBay, rather than trying to find another way to contact the seller, so you have an easy record of all messages back and forth. Be polite and you may find they can help you find a cheaper way to get your stuff!

DID YOU KNOW?

Annual rock festival Glastonbury introduced strict ticket policies to stop its tickets turning up on eBay. Tickets were assigned to the legitimate purchaser, who was expected to take ID to the festival to prove it was his or hers.



▲ Buy it now or add to your shopping basket and buy it later!



▲ It used to be difficult to buy several items from one seller without paying for postage multiple times – but not any more!

MORE USES FOR THE SHOPPING BASKET

Although you won't see the 'Add to basket' link on auction-style listings, eBay still uses it: once you bid on something, it's automatically added to your basket. If you're the winning bidder, you can then pay for your item through the shopping basket. If you're not, you'll have to remove the item at a later date. After an auction ends, you'll see a label next to the item in your shopping basket telling you whether you won or not, so it's all pretty clear.

THINGS YOU CAN'T PUT IN A BASKET

eBay reckons its new shopping basket tool will improve the shopping experience for both buyers and sellers, but there are a few things you can't put in your basket. You can't add property or motors to your basket, for example (makes sense, really – how would you carry them?), and you also can't add items that are listed for sale in foreign currencies or where the seller doesn't post to the

country you live in. For most things, though, you'll be able to use the shopping basket, and that should mean you can get better deals on postage and packaging without having to wait around for responses from sellers or mess around with any third-party nonsense.

COMBINE ALL PAYPAL PAYMENTS

A quick note on combining PayPal payments: there's an easy way to process all your orders via PayPal, but this isn't the same as combining orders from one seller. If you've bought – or 'won' – more than one item on eBay, from more than one seller, you can pay for them all at once by hitting the 'Pay for All PayPal Items' button on your eBay home page, under 'Items I've Won'.

Really, sometimes you'd think eBay wanted you to spend tons of money on its site, considering how many different ways it tries to make the whole process so incredibly easy!



▲ Need to sort out combined shipping? Get in touch with your seller

WEBSITE REVIEW

FOLK

fo.lk

★★★★★



A site set up by users of the HotUKDeals service, who were fed up with the service that eBay was offering, FOLK is a community classifieds service at heart. You can place for sale/trade adverts, as well as wanted classifieds and offers to give things away for free.

It's small enough to remain community driven, and that means there's reasonable policing of the listings taking place. What's interesting is that each listing can have user comments attached, which allows more obvious and open interaction with the seller. A promising service.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

TOENAIL CLIPPINGS

A female seller auctioned a set of toenail clippings, with one clipping from each toe offered. They sold, but only for a dollar.

How To Get Your Money Back

If you want a refund, then you'll be glad to know it's not too hard

It's rare to get ripped off on eBay nowadays. If a seller's got a good reputation, that usually means they're a safe bet, and you can feel safe buying from them. But nothing's ever completely guaranteed. Luckily, eBay has systems in place for settling disputes between buyers and sellers, and if you're a buyer, you'll be glad to know that rulings generally go in your favour. Usually, getting a refund on a faulty product or one that never arrives is pretty straightforward, especially if you've paid with PayPal.

TALK IT OUT

The first thing eBay will tell you, if you have a problem with something you've bought, is that you should contact the seller. Often, things can be settled in a friendly way; it might just be an honest misunderstanding or something that was out of the seller's control that they can put right for you.

The best way to contact a seller is to use eBay's messaging function. The seller will be notified of your message via email, so they won't miss it, but using this messaging function means there's a full record of everything that happened between you, should you need to refer to that later.

When you open 'My eBay' you'll see a 'Contact seller' link next to every item in the list of things you've bought, so it's quite straightforward to do. Be polite in your

emails; although arguing over things involving money can get emotional, it's best to just stick to the facts and ask the seller what's going on.

Hopefully, they'll reply and offer you a refund or replacement, and the matter will be settled. Sellers want you to give them good feedback, after all, and will usually find a way to solve problems so that you're happy with the way the transaction eventually worked out. If not, you'll have to move on to filing a dispute.

DISPUTES

When a seller either doesn't respond to a message from a buyer or is unwilling to offer some resolution over a problem, it's time to get eBay involved. Head to the eBay Resolution Centre (resolutioncentre.ebay.co.uk) to open a case. You'll need to have some information about the item to hand; it helps if you can find the email you received when you bought the item or if you have your 'My eBay' account open in another tab.

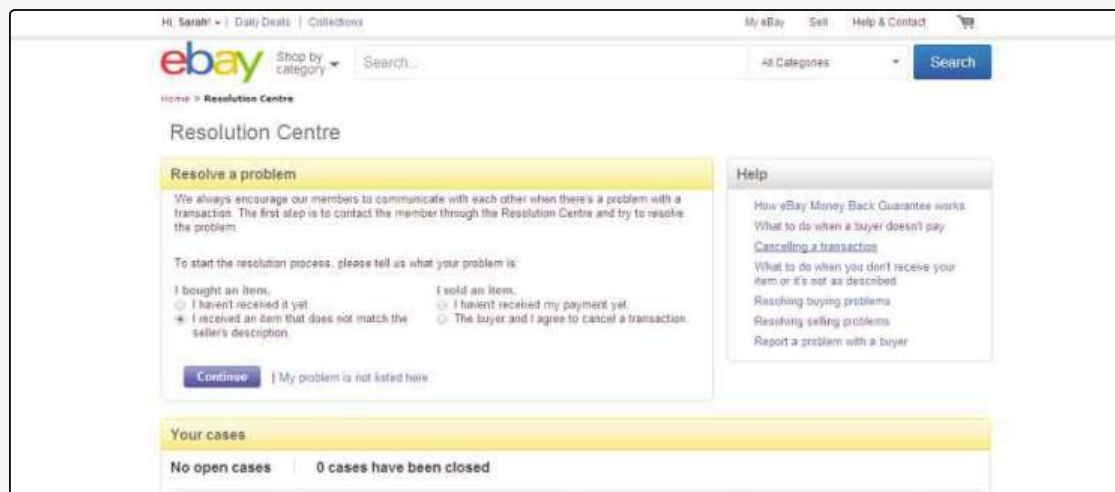
There are a few different reasons why you might want to open a case against a seller: an item might not have arrived, it might have arrived but been significantly different from what you were expecting, or it might just be unsuitable in some other way that means you want to return it and get a refund. Once you've opened a case, the seller will be notified that you've done so, and that's often enough to get the ball rolling and prompt them to make reparations in some way.

If not, after three days have passed, you can escalate the case. That means it'll be sent to eBay Customer Support, which will review the information that's been provided in order to make a decision. It might need to ask you for some more info if you haven't given it enough to go on in the first place, so be as descriptive as possible and you'll help make the process run more quickly and smoothly.

A customer support rep will get in touch with you within two days, and if they rule in your favour (as they usually will), you'll get a full refund, including a refund of any shipping costs you paid. If you're reporting an item that wasn't what you expected, you might be asked to return it to the seller, depending on what it is. If it's some kind of counterfeit goods, like a fake designer handbag, you'll usually be asked to destroy it instead.

The timings are all pretty tight when it comes to filing disputes. You'll need to open a case within 45 days of

▲ Usually, all it takes is an email to sort things out with a seller



▲ If you're not happy, ask eBay to step in and help resolve your problem

buying the item, which sounds like a long time, but it can easily slip away if you buy a lot of stuff online and don't pay attention. This limit also means that if you're already getting into discussions with the seller, if they haven't resolved your problem satisfactorily, it's worth opening a case before the time runs out, just as a precaution. When the problem has been sorted, you can just mark it as resolved and the case will be closed – but it'll mean you can turn to eBay for backup later if you need it. All cases are automatically closed after 30 days if you don't escalate them, so it's worth keeping an eye on that too!

Once eBay has ruled that you're entitled to a refund, you should get the money within three days. If not, chase it up with eBay and it'll pester the seller for you.

PARTIAL REFUNDS

Sometimes, you might not get all of your money back. Sellers might choose to offer you a partial refund if, for example, your item arrived damaged or wasn't quite as you expected it to be. If you want to keep the item, but aren't happy with the way it was described, this might be a suitable option for you. When a seller offers you a partial refund, you get ten days to decide whether to take it or not. If you think you're entitled to more, you can refuse or ignore it; after the ten days are up, the offer will expire, and you'll have to carry on working with the seller or eBay to find a way to resolve the case.

SMALL CLAIMS COURT

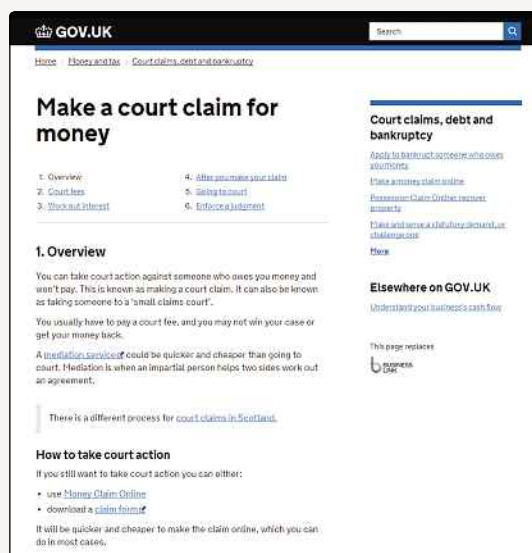
In some cases, even eBay can't make the seller refund your money. Some particularly disreputable types will empty their PayPal accounts or even close their eBay accounts to prevent money being given back to buyers. If a seller has gone that far, then you might have to accept that you won't get your money back. If it's a substantial sum of money, though, there's one other way you could pursue a refund, assuming you know the

seller's name and address. You could take them to the small claims court.

Through the Gov.uk website (www.gov.uk) you can use the 'Money Claim Online' form, which will mean the other party will get a summons to court. You'll have to pay the court fee, but if you win the other party will be required to pay it. It costs £50, so if your item was worth less than that, it's probably not worth it, but it's always an option, if you need it.

EVERYTHING USUALLY WORKS OUT

This might all sound a bit ominous, but don't worry. It's very rare that you'll have a problem with a seller, and even if you do, most issues are sorted out with a simple email or two. You'd be unlucky to even need to escalate any kind of dispute to eBay's customer services, let alone anything else.



▲ As a last resort, you could take a seller to the small claims court

Case Study: Luzern

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to using eBay. Here, we take a look at what they are

Electrical goods are one of the most popular types of items on eBay. The most popular searches, as detailed by eBay Pulse, often include entries for tablet computers, smartphones and games consoles. People love a bargain and it seems electrical items tend to provide them. The expense of them means there will always be people searching to find the best prices.

One of the companies offering such items is Irish firm Luzern, which sells a wealth of goods from audio and hi-fi to camcorders, DVD players, televisions, mobile phones, sunglasses, watches and even car parts. Although the company was established before it began selling on eBay, its presence on the auction site is one of its main outlets and, with around 100,000 feedbacks to its name, it's doing pretty well.

The company was once particularly strong when it came to selling refurbished products, and it used to specialise in PDAs and smartphones, but it has since expanded. That said, selling refurbished products is an idea worth exploring. Doing so takes advantage of the

problems companies face when people return items to a shop. Often the returned item has been removed from its original packaging so the shop cannot then resell it as new. The shop will return the product to the manufacturer, which then has to work out what to do with it.

That's where a seller of refurbished products steps in. It snaps up the opened goods, refurbishes them, ensures they are in great shape and then ships them out to lucky eBay punters. Nowadays, however, Luzern partners with leading brands and retailers including Acer, Creative, Palm, Philips, LG and Sony.

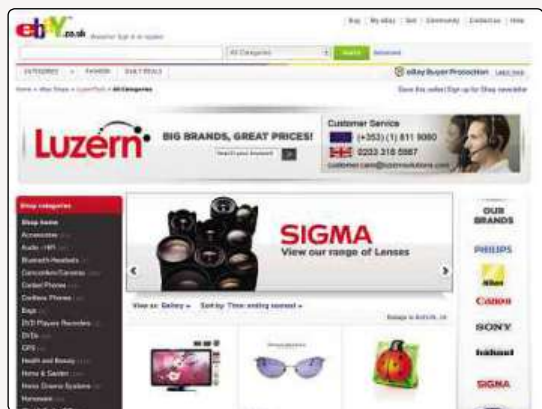
Luzern sells a lot of stock through eBay, although it also has a stand-alone website. Although it has a range of Buy It Now offers, it typically starts its auctions at the low possible price of 99p and it does not include a reserve. This means buyers have complete influence over the resulting price and there are substantial savings to be made.

Business development director Shane Manton said, "We believe Luzern has many advantages over high-street electrical stores. In the high street, you pay what the retailer demands, but through eBay we offer open auctions where you can get a real bargain and that encourages people to buy."

"And I would also say that Feedback is vitally important. It says everything about your service. We take it very seriously."

LuzernTech's strength also lies in making its presence known. It has regular auctions each day, never ending before noon or after 11:30pm. Its research shows that ending auctions outside of those times tends to lower the final price the item fetches.





▲ Luzern sells a wide range of good via its eBay store

The large number of goods for sale each day also means buyers have a higher chance of clicking on one of its offerings. Even if the buyer does not decide to bid on that particular item, he or she may be tempted to click on the link, which takes you to the Luzern eBay shop. And then the buyer is presented with a huge range of goods from which to choose.

Mr Manton said, "Auctions allow you gain reasonable volume of customers and, of course, auctions are a true reflection of the open market worth of a product. The internet allows you the potential to get to the maximum audience. The web is so vast it is often difficult to ensure they find you, but eBay makes it easier."

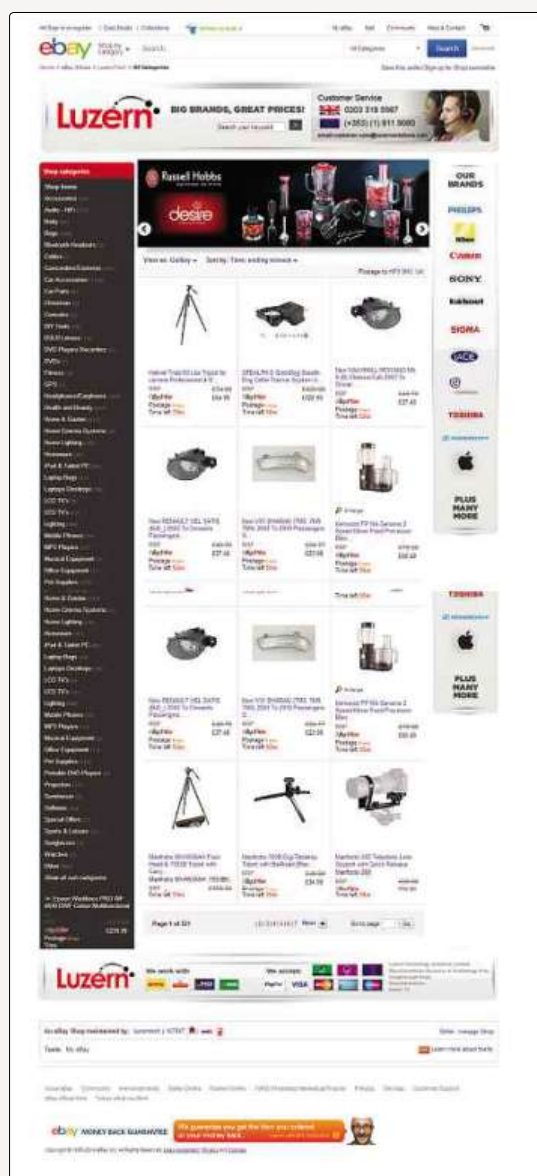
The eBay shop runs alongside Luzern's own website, which offers items at fixed prices in both pound sterling and euros. However, Manton feels eBay is an important part of the business.

The eBay shop is well branded and easy to navigate. It clearly states what Luzern is and does and it has a list of all the items up for auction. The site also includes the all-important About Me icon, a quick click on which shows the extent of the company's operation.

As well as company information, the site aims to give buyers even greater confidence in making a purchase from the shop. There are a bunch of links that explain the warranty, terms of sale and shipping costs. There's also a Frequently Asked Questions section.

Luzern only accepts eBay payments via PayPal. It does not accept cash or cheques and says this makes payment more accountable and prevents the hassle of bounced or forged cheques or having to wait for cheque clearance. Luzern is a PowerSeller and, as such, is regarded as a pillar of the eBay community. The powers that be at eBay say PowerSellers are exemplary members with 98% positive feedback and an excellent sales performance record.

So what are the secrets of success? According to Manton, "Our main selling points are great prices, quality of product and service. You can't go wrong with those three."



▲ eBay gives Luzern's customers the chance to bag a bargain

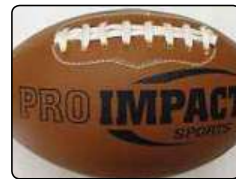


Chapter 6

PayPal

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What Is PayPal?

It's an essential part of the eBay experience, so here's your crash course on what this payment system is all about

You'll have seen PayPal mentioned many times throughout this guide, but what exactly is it, and how does it work? Well, while PayPal isn't really a bank, you won't go far wrong if you think of your PayPal account as being like a bank account. However, you can't nip to your local branch at lunchtime to make a deposit; everything happens over the internet.

On eBay, a PayPal account is vital. About 90% of all eBay sales are concluded with PayPal, and worldwide there are over 244 million accounts. For buyers, PayPal is simply the most convenient way to pay. For sellers, allowing PayPal as a payment method is pretty much compulsory (you can only get away with not offering it on items listed in property, services or eBay Motors).

One of PayPal's big advantages over traditional payment methods is its speed. You can pay for an item via your PayPal balance or a credit or debit card (and, with some caveats, direct from your bank account), and in most cases the seller receives the money instantly. Neither party has to mess about with cheques, waiting for them to clear. For the seller, it's like having a professional merchant system, the sort of thing used by large retailers.

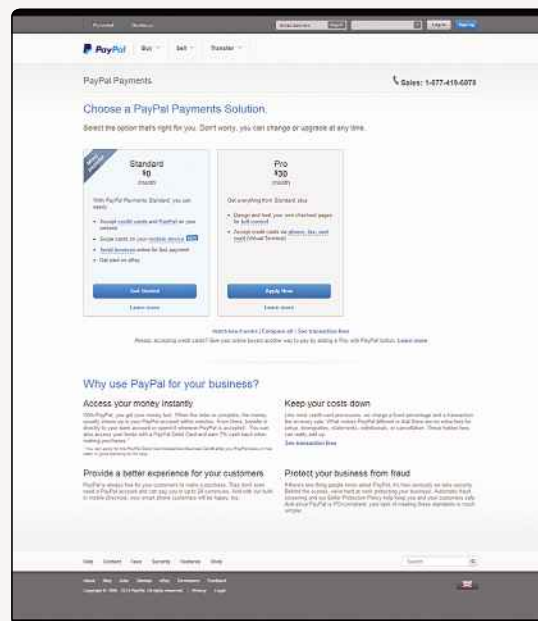
Another big advantage is security. When you buy something on eBay, you're usually dealing with strangers or unknown businesses. Only a fool wouldn't be cautious about handing over debit or credit card information. With PayPal, though, there are no worries; PayPal acts as an intermediary, a broker, so the seller never sees your financial details.

HOW IT WORKS

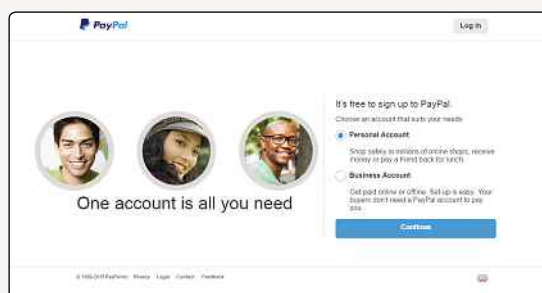
When you win an auction on eBay, you'll be prompted to pay for your item. You can do that immediately, on the screen you're directed to, or you can click through the link in your confirmation email or through the My eBay section of the site. You might even find you receive an email directly from the seller too, confirming your win and asking for the money.

All of these prompts will take you to the same place: the screen where you choose your payment method. PayPal is usually the default, but if the seller accepts cheques and other methods, you'll be able to choose one of those too. If you've linked your PayPal account to your eBay account, paying will be as easy as clicking a confirmation button – if not, you might need to type in your password before the money changes hands.

Where does the money come from? Well, if you sell on eBay, you might have funds available in your account, which is the first place PayPal will take money from to pay for new buys. If there isn't enough money there, or none at all, then PayPal



▲ PayPal lets business accounts accept payments in all kinds of ways



▲ If you're going to be selling on eBay, you'll need a business account

DID YOU KNOW?

It's been estimates that about a quarter of all ancient coins and two-thirds of all antiques sold on eBay are actually modern replicas. Well, we're not all antiques experts, after all...

How To... Set Up A PayPal Account

One way or another, you're going to need a PayPal account before you can get stuck into eBay, so here's how to set one up:

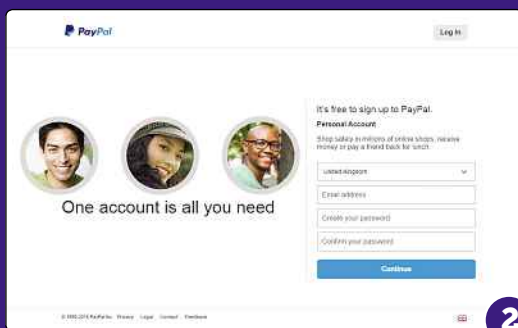
1. To begin, go to www.paypal.co.uk and click the grey Sign Up button on the right-hand side of the screen. You'll be asked whether you want to set up a Personal or Business account; here, we'll show you how to create a Personal account.
2. Now type in the email address you want to associate with your PayPal account. This will be visible to people sending you payments, so bear that in mind. You also need to set up a password, so pick something memorable.
3. On the next screen you'll add the rest of your personal information, including your name, address, date of birth, and mobile number.

You'll also need to confirm you agree to the User Agreement and other policies, so click to read those.

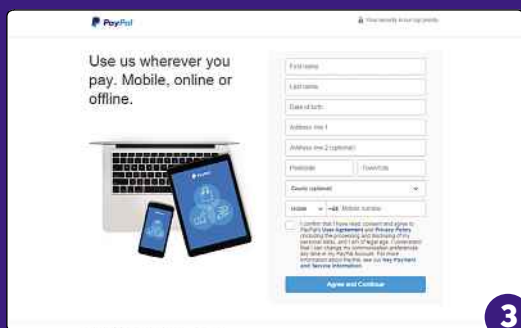
4. Before you can send or receive payments, you'll need to connect PayPal to your money. Add your card information by clicking Add A Card and typing in your card type, number and expiry date.
5. You can also connect PayPal directly to your bank account, though for this there's a confirmation process: you set up a Direct Debit instruction, and PayPal deposits 1p in your account together with a four-digit code. This isn't required, but it will mean PayPal lifts the limits on your account.
6. Now you're set up, whenever you log into PayPal you'll see a summary of all your recent activity, including any eBay transactions you've made. Take a minute to get familiar with it now, and you'll find it's soon very easy to navigate.



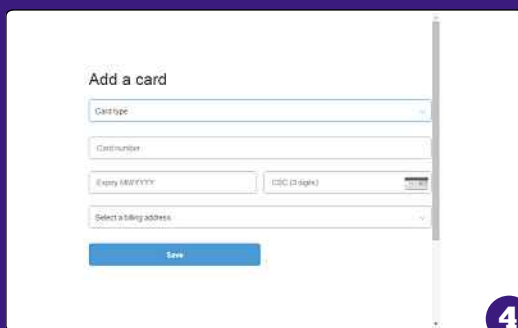
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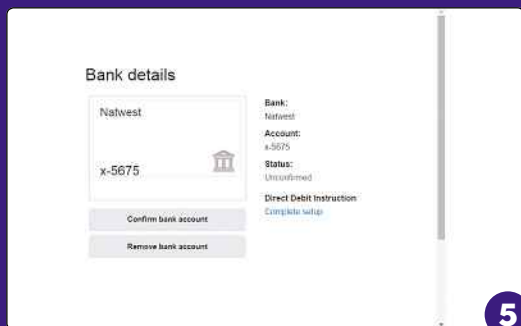
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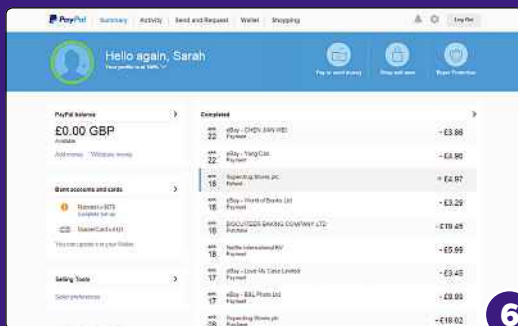
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5



6

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

A PART IN ALLY MCBEAL



Producers of the hit TV comedy *Ally McBeal* once auctioned an extra's part on eBay. Not exactly a ticket to stardom, but an excellent bit of cheap publicity for the show.

CHAPTER 6

PAYPAL



will take the money from the payment method you've set up. That might be your credit card, debit card or directly from your bank account. You won't need to keep typing in your card number or bank account details; it'll all be stored safely and securely in your PayPal account, so all you need to remember is your PayPal password.

From the seller's point of view, things are even simpler. When a buyer pays using PayPal, you'll get an email confirmation, and the funds will appear in your account. PayPal will also automatically send the buyer a receipt, though if you want to send them a personal thank you to acknowledge receipt of their payment, you could do that too.

ACCOUNT TYPES

Not all PayPal accounts are created alike. Basically, there are three main options: Personal, Premier and Business. All of them are free, and there are no start-up costs or monthly administration fees.

A Personal account is intended for eBayers who are chiefly interested in buying. If you sell, any PayPal payments you receive must be funded from a PayPal balance or a bank account (although your buyers won't be aware of that). If someone pays for an item via a card – a scenario that'll happen sooner rather than later – your confirmation email will inform you that you need to upgrade. Until you do, the money will remain unavailable, and if you haven't upgraded after 30 days, it'll be returned to the buyer.

You can upgrade at any time: after logging into your account, just click the Upgrade link at the top of the Overview page. If you intend to sell, however, you might as well forgo a Personal account altogether and just sign up for a Premier account. This will lift the limitation on card



▲ Got a shop? You can accept PayPal with this device

◀ Many eBay sellers only accept PayPal

payments right from the start. Most people who begin as buyers quickly end up as sellers, so save yourself the hassle. Once the eBay bug bites, you'll want to start making some cash from all that stuff in your attic.

A Business account differs from a Premier account in that it can be held in the name of a company (Dealz4U Ltd, for example) – the other account types can only be held in the name of an individual. Transactions and emails will therefore look more professional. Furthermore, if you have co-workers, they can be assigned different access rights. For instance, you might want someone to be able to view transactions but not spend or withdraw. To set this up, go to your account's Overview page, click 'Profile', select 'Manage Users', then click 'Add User'. Choose a User ID and password, which will then be the co-worker's login (instead of the usual email address and password), and tick the required rights.

Officially, you're allowed one Personal account and one Premier or Business account. In practice, though, there's no way for that restriction to be enforced, so you can actually set up as many accounts as you want or need. However, every account must have its own email address and financial details. You can't register the same credit card to two different accounts, for example.

STANDARD FEES

They say it's better to give than to receive, and that's certainly true where PayPal's concerned. While sending money (to a seller, say) is free, getting paid (by a buyer, for instance) is anything but. There are nasty, nasty fees.

In most cases, the commission you pay to PayPal is 3.4% of the transaction amount plus an extra £0.20. For example, if a buyer pays you £100, you'll be charged £3.60 – that's £3.40 (3.4%) plus £0.20. In your PayPal account, you'll receive £96.40.

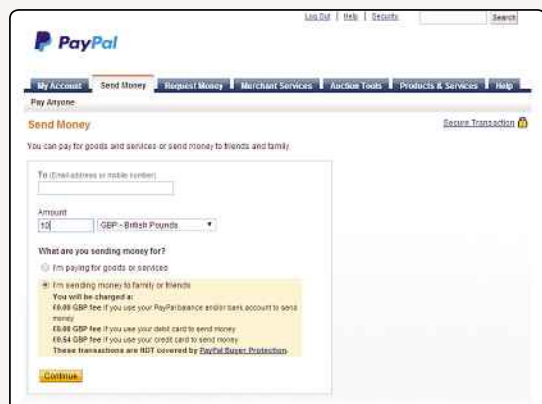
Extra fees may apply in other circumstances, though. For example, if a buyer pays in a currency other than sterling, there's a 2.5% conversion fee.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

BRITNEY SPEARS'S CHEWING GUM



A fan picked up Britney's discarded bubblegum at a London hotel and sold it on eBay. Some fans will do anything for a taste of stardom.



▲ You don't get charged fees to send money to friends and family – unless you use a credit card

If the buyer doesn't live in the UK, there's also a cross-border fee: 0.4% for payments from Northern Europe, 0.5% for payments from the US, Canada, and parts of Europe; 1% for payments from further-flung parts of Europe; and 1.5% for the rest of the world. It can all add up. Imagine you've just sold an item to someone in the USA. Payment will be made in dollars, and when the money hits your account, it'll be automatically converted into pounds. Your total commission will be a whopping 6.4%. And then there's the old £0.20 to be added on top.

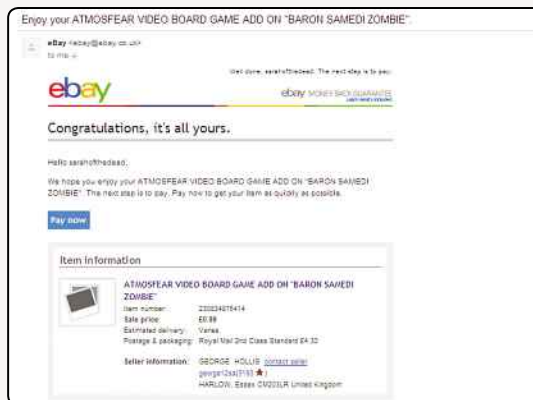
Sadly, PayPal fees are levied in addition to eBay fees: you're charged twice. That's a situation that makes most eBay sellers quite annoyed. Most categories on eBay attract a 10% selling fee, so when everything's combined (don't forget there are usually listing fees too), you're likely to be coughing up about 15% in commission – even more if the transaction involves an extra currency and a border crossing. Small wonder that Pierre Omidyar, eBay's founder, is one of the richest people in the world!

A word of warning, though: you might be tempted to try to charge buyers for the PayPal fees you're going to incur, but that's against the rules. Any eBayers who try to bill buyers for fees will find their listings pulled, and if it happens more than once, their accounts will be shut down. So don't try it.

PERSONAL TRANSFERS

Not all PayPal receipts attract a fee. Personal transfers – payments between friends and family – can in fact be free. That's only true if they're funded from a PayPal balance or a bank account, though. If they're funded by a card, that 3.4% commission applies (regardless of the sum involved).

To make such a transfer, click 'Send Money' at the top of any page and then select the Personal



▲ When you win an auction, eBay's email will remind you to cough up

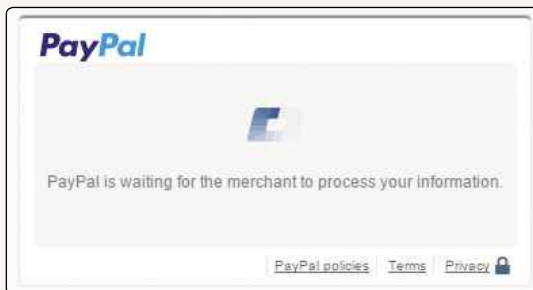
tab. Enter the amount to be sent and also the recipient's PayPal-linked email address. Next, click 'Continue'. You'll now be shown a summary, and if there are any fees, this is where you'll need to decide who pays them – you or the recipient. Once you're all done, just click 'Send Money'.

ACCOUNT WITHDRAWALS

Often you'll want to spend your PayPal money right out of your PayPal account, particularly as an ever-increasing number of websites are offering PayPal as a payment method (it's not just an eBay thing). Just as often, though, you'll want to



▲ Linked accounts make payments super simple



▲ It takes just seconds for a PayPal payment to be processed

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

A GHOST

While metal detecting, an eBay user found a rotten wooden box with two glass jars and a book of handwritten notes inside. He claims to have dropped one, which released a 'black mist' that followed him around. He sold the other jar on eBay, claiming there was a ghost inside. Bid at your peril.

CHAPTER 6

PAYPAL



▲ It's simple to withdraw PayPal funds to your bank account

withdraw your PayPal money to your regular current or savings account – especially as PayPal doesn't pay interest. Until recently, there was a £0.50 charge for withdrawing less than £50, but now there's no charge at all. So that's something. PayPal does reserve the right, however, to bill you £0.50 if your attempt to withdraw funds fails.

To get the ball rolling, go to your account's Overview page, hover your mouse over the Withdraw menu, then select 'Transfer to Bank Account'. On the next screen, enter the amount to withdraw and also the bank account you want to withdraw it to (if you have more than one bank account registered). After clicking 'Continue', you'll get a confirmation screen. Click 'Submit' and you're done. Within a few seconds you'll also get a confirmation email. Note that it'll take up to five working days for the money to arrive.

VERIFYING YOUR FINANCIAL DETAILS

When you first open your PayPal account, its status will be Unverified. This means that you've yet to establish ownership of the associated bank account – assuming you've registered one. If you haven't yet registered one (during the initial PayPal setup, it's possible to get away with registering just a credit or debit card), you'll need to do so. On your account's Overview page, hover your mouse over the Profile menu and select 'Add or Remove Bank Account'.

But what's the big deal? Well, until you upgrade your status from Unverified to Verified, there'll be limits on the amount of money you can spend, receive and withdraw. These are listed below.

- Sending limit per transaction = £900
- Sending limit per year = £1,000

- Withdrawal limit per month = £500
- Withdrawal limit per year = £650
- Receiving limit per year = £1,900

The limits are there so that PayPal can conform to EU anti-money-laundering laws. They also help to fight fraud. To see how much you've currently eaten into them, click the 'View limits' link on your account's Overview page.

To verify your account and get the limits lifted, you need to link your bank account to your PayPal account. After you've entered your bank details into PayPal, a 1p deposit will be put into your account, with a four digit code as a reference. You'll need to enter that reference to prove to PayPal that you really are the owner of the bank account, and then the limits will be lifted.

All these security measures are, of course, designed to make PayPal safe. They also facilitate the aforementioned Seller Protection – and Buyer Protection too. For the latest policies and eligibility requirements, visit the PayPal Security Centre (paypal.com/uk/webapps/mpp/paypal-safety-and-security).

PAYPAL ON THE MOVE

As well as using PayPal to send and receive money on your PC, you can now also get PayPal on your mobile device. It's a free app, but as you'd expect, there are a few more security hoops to jump through before you can get it up and running. You'll need to download the app, enter your PayPal username and password, and then click through the options to link your mobile number.

Considering how sensitive your PayPal account information is, it's as reassuring as it is time consuming to get everything set up properly.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Daily Telegraph, blue badges issued to disabled people are being sold on eBay for up to £5,000. The badges are displayed in motor vehicles and give the owner extensive parking rights and exemption from the London congestion charge. But it's illegal to sell them, and to use them if you're able-bodied.

Payment Receiving Preferences

Note: You are currently accepting subscription payments. Changing your preferences may affect these payments.

Accept payments sent to me in a currency I do not hold:

- ☐ Yes, accept and convert them to British Pounds. Additional charges apply.
- ☐ No, refuse the payments.
- ☐ Ask me to decide whether to accept or refuse each individual payment.

Block account payments:

You may prevent account payments by blocking duplicate invoice IDs:

- ☐ Yes. Block multiple payments per invoice ID.
- ☐ No, allow multiple payments per invoice ID.

Block Payments from users who:

Block payments from Student account users under 18 years old:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, allow payments from all Student account users

Display "Add Instructions to Seller" text in email:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

The Credit Card Statement Name is the name that will appear on your customers' credit card statements. The name can be 11 alpha-numeric characters in length, including spaces. For some payments, the name can be extended to 18 alpha-numeric characters in length, including spaces. [Learn More](#)

Credit Card Statement Name: SARANTHEUR (11 Character Maximum)

Extended Credit Card Statement Name: SARANTHEUR (18 Character Maximum)

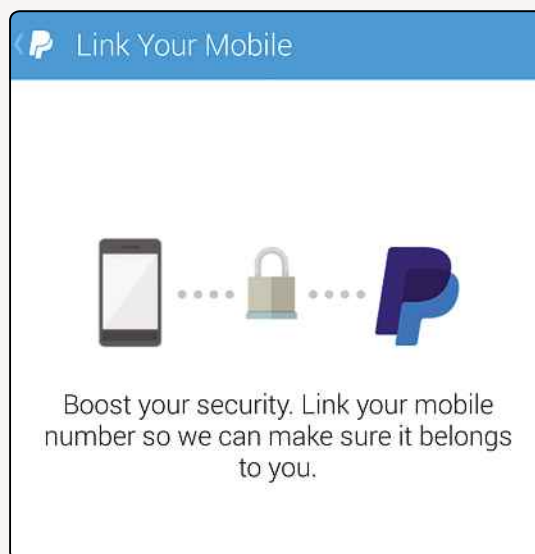
[Save](#) [Cancel](#)

▲ There are fees for accepting payments in foreign currencies, but you can choose to decline those kinds of payments

Once the app is up and running, you'll be able to do all the things you can do with your online account, like sending money and checking on your account balance – plus you can find retailers near you who accept PayPal as a form of payment.

In the Local tab, assuming you have your phone's GPS feature switched on, you'll see a list of all the businesses nearby who accept PayPal, along with their addresses and how far away they are. Using your PayPal account to pay for goods and services in the real world comes with several advantages (you can pay in advance, settle a tab from your seat or easily split a bill with your friends), but mostly it comes in handy when you're not carrying any cash.

There's another real-world PayPal service too, called PayPal Here. Launched in 2012, it allows



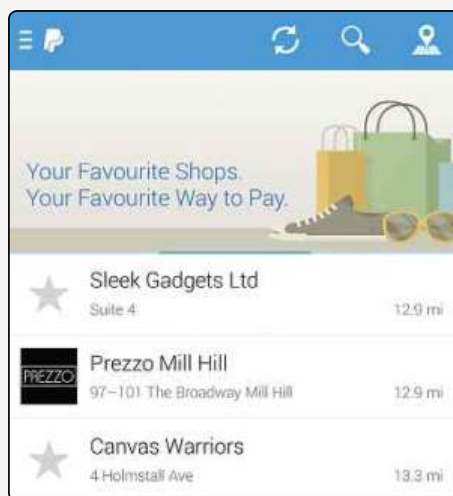
▲ Link your mobile to PayPal to make payments on the go

businesses to accept card payments straight into their PayPal accounts. It's ideal for small traders or local businesses who might not want to pay for a credit card reading system: the PayPal Here card reader costs £99 to buy, and then all payments are subject to a 2.75% service charge. PayPal Here is just as secure and reliable as PayPal's other services and might be worth looking into if you own a small business or attend regular craft fairs or boot sales. You never know when accepting card payments might make the difference between making a sale or missing out.

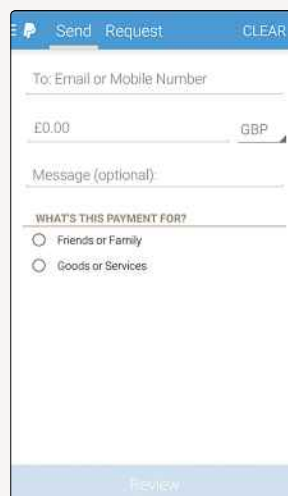
We've talked a lot about the benefits and advantages of PayPal, but is it really all it's cracked up to be? Is it 100% secure and problem-free? Well, you're about to find out...



▲ Adding a photo lets real-world shops verify your identity



▲ Shops near you now accept PayPal payments in-store



▲ All you need is an email address or phone number to send money

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

EXETER UNIVERSITY



Students at Exeter University in south Devon put the intuition up for sale on eBay in 2004 as a protest over the cost of education. It attracted bids of £10 million before it was taken down.

Problems With PayPal

It may be the most popular payment system on eBay, but don't be fooled by the hype; it's far from perfect...

PayPal has been with us for about seventeen years now, and as time has gone by, it has come to dominate online auction transactions the world over. These days, it's almost impossible to trade on eBay without holding such an account, thanks to the increasing tightening of eBay regulations in that area. However, is it really all it's made out to be? Are there any chinks in its armour that you should be aware of?

Firstly, it would only be fair to point out that the vast majority of PayPal's millions of customers have never had a problem with the service. They find it both a convenient and reliable means for trading on eBay. For them, PayPal works exactly as it should, providing a means of transferring money from one account into another securely and without fuss. It's a free service for the buyer, and sellers don't mind paying a little bit extra in charges if it takes away the hassle of receiving payments.

However, the picture isn't quite as rosy as you might first think. There are countless horror stories of people having their accounts locked and being unable to access their money. Every day, millions of hoax emails get sent pretending to be from PayPal, and people have fallen for scams like this in the past. There are also plenty of users who feel hard done by when it comes to paying the

charges set by both eBay and PayPal when selling an item. And, of course, there's the lack of choice presented to those consumers who wish to avoid the service altogether. They view PayPal's share of the market and lack of viable alternatives as being both anti-competitive and negative.

ACCOUNT FREEZES

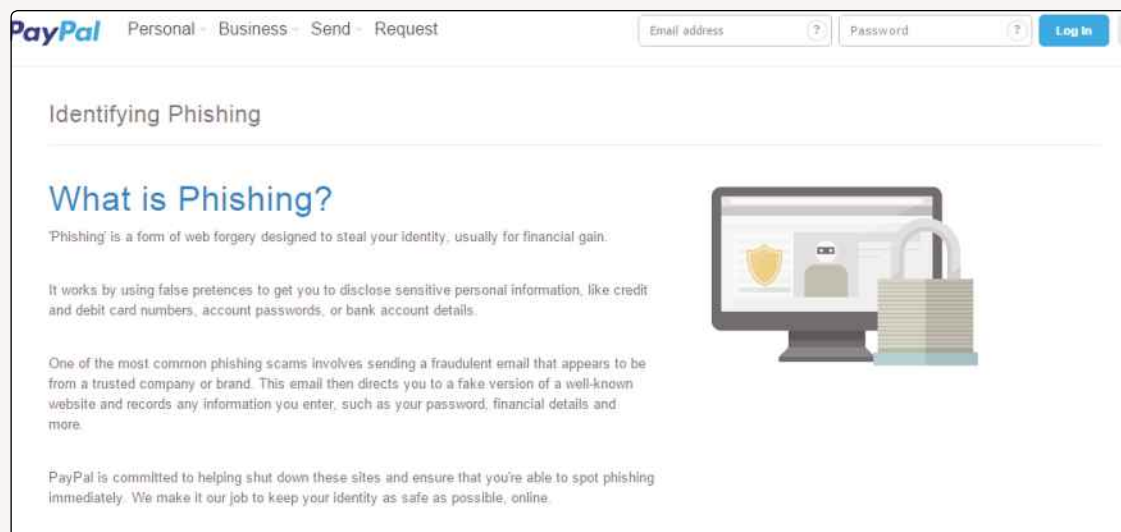
It's important to remember that PayPal, despite handling some extremely large financial transactions, is not actually a bank. As such, it's not governed by the same rules and regulations that banks and similar organisations are. For this reason, it can attract money launderers and other criminal elements looking to transfer substantial sums of money without raising too many eyebrows. This was particularly rife in PayPal's early days, but since then, stricter security measures have been put in place, and there are now more regular audits and checks on people's accounts.

The upshot of all this is that PayPal is now more a lot more careful and stringent with how it deals with potential cases.

One of the first things PayPal does when it notices discrepancies is to place a freeze on the account in question. This means that while an account is being investigated, all money is blocked

DID YOU KNOW?

Gareth Griffiths, head of Trust and Safety for eBay in the UK and Ireland, defends eBay's unwillingness to intervene in trader disputes. "We created the high street," he said. "We don't own the shops, we're not the police, we do provide the infrastructure, we do have an immigration policy. However, there's an element of responsibility for the people walking along the high street. There will always be the dodgy guy in the trench coat"



PayPal Personal Business Send Request

Email address ? Password ? Log In

Identifying Phishing

What is Phishing?

'Phishing' is a form of web forgery designed to steal your identity, usually for financial gain.

It works by using false pretences to get you to disclose sensitive personal information, like credit and debit card numbers, account passwords, or bank account details.

One of the most common phishing scams involves sending a fraudulent email that appears to be from a trusted company or brand. This email then directs you to a fake version of a well-known website and records any information you enter, such as your password, financial details and more.

PayPal is committed to helping shut down these sites and ensure that you're able to spot phishing immediately. We make it our job to keep your identity as safe as possible, online.

▲ PayPal encourages users to report any fraud they suspect



▲ Credit card fraud is one of the biggest problems facing the internet today

from entering or leaving. In some cases, perfectly innocent people have had a lock placed on their account, and they've sometimes had to wait months until the restriction was lifted and they could use their account again. As you can imagine, this has left a fair few people unhappy, particularly as many of them rely on PayPal as a major source of their income.

The most practical advice here is to make sure that there's never a large sum of money sitting in your PayPal account. It could be potentially disastrous if you can't get access to several thousand pounds, but not so bad if there's less money involved.

It's very rare for this to happen to anyone, but if you're worried that you may fall victim to this one day, the best thing to do is look at alternative payment systems to use instead. Unfortunately, for eBay users, however, they don't really have much choice in the matter.

It's notoriously easy to open a PayPal account, so it can be open to abuse, but just be careful with who you trade with, apply some common sense, and the problem can be minimised.

PHISHING AND HOAX EMAILS

Hoax emails have been a problem that has plagued PayPal for a number of years now. If you ever receive a message purporting to be from PayPal, but something doesn't seem right (for example, you may be told that an item has been purchased from your account that you previously weren't aware of or money has left your account that you didn't authorise), the safest thing to do is log into PayPal yourself to check. It always pays to be far too cautious than not enough. By clicking on the link in one of these hoax emails, you'll usually be redirected to another website, which requests your bank details and other personal information. This is known as a phishing scam.



▲ PayPal has had its fair share of hackers and fraudsters over the years

These emails look almost identical to official emails sent out by both PayPal and eBay, which can fool some people if they're not careful. The email normally instructs the person to follow a link to a website, which again looks very similar to a legitimate site, whereupon they're asked to enter their bank details in order to verify the account.

It goes without saying that you shouldn't do this, because you're handing over all your personal information to a stranger. You should always be very wary when asked via email to send any personal information. A little bit of common sense is required to spot these emails, but some scams are less obvious than others.

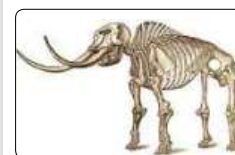
One of the biggest giveaways is the address in the browser. The link may say www.paypal.com, but when you click on it and actually visit the site, you'll find that you've been redirected somewhere else. It's best to always play safe.

If you're worried about falling victim to fraudsters and hackers, there are a few simple precautions that you can take in order to keep your account safe. These are all sensible procedures that you should follow for any online accounts involving finances or personal details.

Firstly, make sure you choose a good password that other people can't guess easily. Having your surname or part of your address as a password is a risky move. Try to keep it as ambiguous as possible – nothing that a potential hacker will be able to easily guess. If you're worried that your details may

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

A MAMMOTH SKELETON



One of the five best-preserved prehistoric mammoth skeletons in the world sold on eBay for £61,000. It was 50,000 years old and weighed a massive 250,00kg.

CHAPTER 6

PAYPAL



▲ Phishing is one of the many scams PayPal users have to contend with

still be in danger of falling into the wrong hands, then change it regularly.

Do not share your account details with anyone who isn't connected with PayPal itself. Certain hoax emails ask for this information, but you should always bypass these and log into your PayPal account by typing the web address in your browser. Never follow a link sent via email, because this could be rerouted to another website.

When accessing your PayPal information, make sure the site is accessed through a secure connection. You can tell if it is by looking at the address bar. It should read 'https' rather than 'http' before the actual web address.

Keep on top of things too. Check your PayPal account regularly, in order to know exactly how much money is in there at any given time. It will show all your recent transactions, and if there's any unexpected activity on your account, you should be able to catch it as soon as possible.

DOUBLE CHARGES

PayPal sellers on eBay are hit with two sets of charges – something that has annoyed many of its users for quite some time now. When you decide to sell an item on eBay, you're charged an insertion fee, based on either the starting or reserve price. You may also be charged optional fees for various features that can be incorporated into the listing (such as a picture).

The fees don't end there, though; when you make a sale, eBay then charges you a fee based on the final selling price. All well and good, but then if you make a sale using PayPal, you will also get charged an additional fee for the transaction (normally 3.4% plus £0.20). That's two sets of fees: one for eBay and the other for PayPal. That's particularly annoying because eBay and PayPal are closely linked; eBay bought PayPal in 2002, so both lots of fees were essentially going to the same company.

Selling with PayPal.

Standard transaction fee within the UK:	3.4% + 20p per transaction
Discounted fee for eligible merchants and not-for-profit organisations (upon application and approval):	As low as 1.8% + 20p per transaction based on volume
Micropayments within the UK (upon application and approval):	5% + 5p per transaction
PayPal Here™ (upon application and approval):	2.75% for payments using Chip and PIN cards and PayPal check-in. 3.4% + 20p for card payments made by swiping the magnetic strip or manually entering the card details. Other fees may apply. PayPal Business account fees apply to all other payments received.
International sales:	Additional fees apply for currency conversion and cross-border payments

▲ PayPal's fees can soon add up, especially when you consider they come on top of the standard eBay charges

And though eBay spun PayPal off as a separate business in 2015, it doesn't make paying those extra fees any less painful.

As a case in point, let's have a look at how much selling an item for £10 would cost you, with the list price starting at £0.01.

Item value: £10
eBay insertion fee: £0
eBay sale completion: £1
PayPal charge: £0.54
Total returned to you: £8.46

The more expensive the product, the more charges increase in value. For example:

Item value: £50
eBay insertion fee: £0
eBay sale completion: £5
PayPal charge: £1.90
Total returned to you: £43.10

Many sellers offset these fees by including them in the list price. The buyer will cover any charges in their purchase, as a consequence leaving the seller with more profit. That does mean bumping up prices, though, which might not make customers very happy.

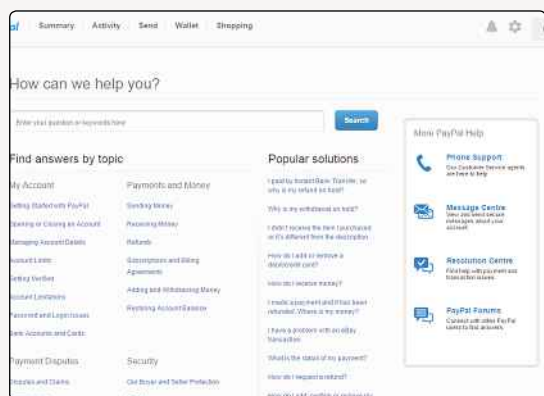
POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

PayPal's customer service has also come under attack in some quarters, with the majority of complaints revolving around its support guarantee. Because PayPal doesn't operate under the same laws as a bank or financial organisation, many people are left disappointed when it comes to trying to claim money back. PayPal, it has been said, is almost a law unto itself.

If your claim is rejected by PayPal, and you feel that justice hasn't been done, apart from the

DID YOU KNOW?

A Virginia family sold a stain from the floor of their garage that looked (vaguely) like Jesus Christ on eBay. It raised \$1,525.69.



▲ PayPal has been accused of not being terribly helpful

police, there's nowhere else really that you can turn, short of something like the small claims court. It may offer guarantees, but these are only set by some extremely strict criteria that a seller must follow if they're to have any chance of winning their money back. Even then, if everything possible is done to follow the conditions set (all records and proof of postage have been kept and the claim is within the period of response), PayPal can still decide to reject the claim.

Matters are only made worse with the lack of customer contact numbers on its website. If you wish to make a complaint, then you have to email customer services and wait for a reply, which is hardly the swift response you need in a crisis.

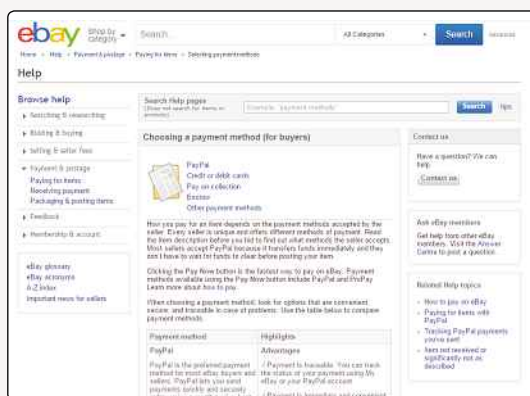
So what can you do? If you're unhappy with your complaint to PayPal, you must obtain a letter from it that's known legally as a 'stalemate letter', confirming that there's a dispute. Once you receive that, you the have the right to complain to the Financial Ombudsman – a long, drawn-out and rather painful process.

Like many things in life, PayPal is fine when it's working for you, but a complete pain when something goes wrong. Poor response times, unsatisfactory solutions and, most importantly, no way of legally challenging its decisions have resulted in some people losing a lot of money.

MARKET DOMINATION

PayPal has such a grip on eBay that buyers and sellers are almost forced to use it if they wish to trade. For more than two years now, it has been a compulsory ruling for new sellers on eBay's UK site to offer PayPal as a payment method in their listings. The rules are simple: if you don't use PayPal, you can't list your item. It argues that PayPal is the safest option, but this has still riled many people, who may have wished to avoid using it.

As it stands, the only category where PayPal isn't a must-have is in Motors, where by its very nature



▲ You won't find many mention of rival payment services on eBay

the collection and payment part of the transaction is normally dealt with in person.

The same ruling has been applied in other countries as well. That said, in Australia, eBay had to backtrack on its PayPal-only crusade. The ruling conflicted with the Australian Consumer Competition Commission, which forced eBay to delay making such widespread changes.

Will the eBay/PayPal split open up the marketplace to alternative payments systems? We'll have to wait and see, but for the last few years at least, many rival services have missed out - while buyers found themselves without any real alternatives. Analysts think that dividing into two separate businesses will only strengthen both companies, with PayPal especially benefiting from moving into other payment arenas beyond the online auction house, and only time will tell if they're right.



▲ In the early days, PayPal was no stranger to courts of law...

Other Ways To Pay

Although PayPal is closely tied to eBay, other payment options are available

Most of the time, if you're buying stuff on eBay, you'll be using PayPal. With very few exceptions, eBay sellers are required to accept PayPal (unless they're selling property, motors or services), and it's often the quickest and easiest way to pay. Because eBay owns PayPal, the two services are intertwined, and that makes the whole checkout process virtually seamless. But if you really don't want to use PayPal, there are a few other ways you can pay or be paid; it's just that all of them are a bit more inconvenient than PayPal.

CHEQUES AND POSTAL ORDERS

The most old-fashioned way to make or accept payments on eBay is by using cheques or postal orders. Many people don't even have chequebooks any more, so

this is unlikely to be a common method, but nonetheless, eBay does allow it. Using this method, once a buyer has won an auction or committed to buy a Buy It Now listing, they get the seller's info and then write and post a cheque or postal order. The seller will pay the money into their account, usually waiting for it to clear before sending out the item.

The whole transaction therefore takes much longer than it would using an electronic payment method. Sellers tend not to be keen either, because cheques can bounce if the buyer doesn't have enough money in his or her account.

CREDIT CARDS

In order to accept non-PayPal credit card transactions through eBay, sellers must have some

PayPal's Competitors

Although it's the most commonly used digital payment system on eBay, PayPal isn't the only service for sending and receiving money over the internet. It's just that eBay doesn't make it easy for people to use alternatives; it's rare to find a seller who accepts anything other than PayPal. Still, alternatives do exist, and with eBay spinning PayPal off into a separate entity, we might see some of these starting to be used more often:

•Skrill (www.skrill.com)

Formerly known as MoneyBookers, Skrill is a British company that differs from PayPal in several significant ways: you have to transfer money into your account before you can buy anything, buyers rather than sellers have to pay the fees, and the fees themselves are much lower than PayPal. Skrill is developing a mobile app, though, and maybe that will be more successful.

•NoChex (www.nochex.com)

Another British site, NoChex has been around since 2001 but still doesn't come close to PayPal's level of ubiquity – even when it was allowed to be used on eBay. It has rather strict limitations on the amount of money you can transfer or keep in your account and can only be used within the UK.

•PPPay (www.pppay.com)

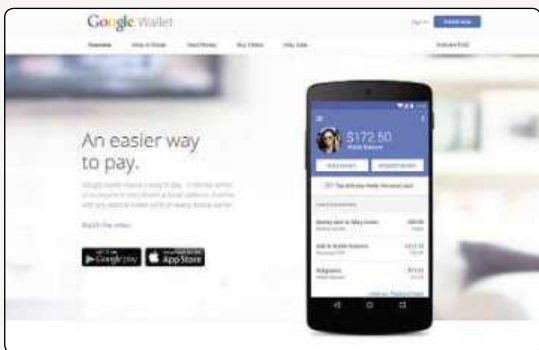
This service is widely used on eBay, an auction site that offers an alternative to eBay. Payments between PPPay accounts don't incur fees, but withdrawing money from your PPPay account costs you 1% of whatever you're withdrawing. It's popular among people who hate both eBay and PayPal, but it's not much good for use on eBay.

•Google Wallet (www.google.com/wallet)

It's been around in the US for ages but Google Wallet has finally launched in UK stores. It's a payment system that's integrated with Gmail, so users can attach money to emails to quickly and simply move money around. Transfers from users' bank accounts, debit cards or Wallet balance don't incur fees; adding money into the Wallet has a 2.9% transaction fee.

•Apple Pay (www.apple.com/apple-pay)

Another big-name digital wallet service, Apple Pay isn't yet available in the UK. Sorry! It's still in its infancy, but considering how popular Apple's devices are, a service that lets you pay directly from your iPhone or Apple Watch could be super successful. And with more than 220,000 retailers on board for the launch, Apple is definitely aiming big. Watch this space.



way of their own of processing card payments. If they're merchants and run their own shops, it's possible that they do, so this method shouldn't be discounted. It's much quicker than sending cheques around, but requires more setting up, and sellers are usually subject to per-transaction fees for processing the payments.

There are advantages to using credit cards to make payments online for the buyer. Payments are trackable, and credit card providers usually offer fraud protection and the option to recall a payment if the seller doesn't provide the goods or service promised. Still, you might not be comfortable handing your credit card details over to a stranger over the internet, and it's worth noting that you can now make credit card payments through PayPal without having to have a PayPal account, which is probably a better option.

ESCROW

Escrow services are third parties who will take payments from buyers, verify them, and then hand them over to sellers once their items have been dispatched. They're usually only used for expensive items, because it's an extra step that isn't always necessary unless a lot of money is changing hands. There's usually a fee, and it's up to the individuals to work out who should pay it.

It's potentially a safe option, assuming you use a reputable escrow service. eBay has approved Escrow.com, so that's probably a good one to use. If you've never heard of an escrow service that a buyer or seller wants to use, it's worth checking them out before entering into anything, just to ensure they're real and trustworthy.

BEWARE OF DODGY TRANSACTIONS

Some dishonest sellers may try to convince you to use alternative methods, outside of eBay, to pay for your goods. Even if they offer you a substantial discount for doing so, you should never take them up on those kinds of offers. Paying outside of the structure of eBay means you've got no comeback if you get ripped off. It's also completely against eBay's rules.

Payment methods that eBay doesn't allow include:

- Sending cash through the post.
- Using cash transfer services like Western Union or MoneyGram.
- Topping up pre-paid credit or debit cards.

It's pretty obvious why: those methods aren't easily traceable, and there's no obvious way to get a refund should something go wrong.

It's also against eBay's rules for sellers to use their item descriptions to offer alternate payment methods not endorsed by eBay, and adding on extra fees to use certain payment methods as a way of pushing customers towards another method is also banned.

It might sound like a stern policy, but it's mostly to keep buyers safe. (The fact that eBay owns PayPal and therefore benefits from transaction fees probably also factors into this decision, at least a little bit, but it's mostly about safety.) The only time these rules are waived is when sellers accept payment on collection, at which point they are allowed to say they'll accept cash – but that makes sense, because in that scenario, both buyer and seller can see what they're getting out of the transaction, and there's no opportunity for the seller to take the money without sending an item!



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EBAY ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives To eBay

Want to do business online somewhere other than eBay? Here are your options...

If you're reading this book, chances are you either use eBay or plan to start soon. And considering it's a massive, well-known, well-respected online marketplace with all kinds of rules and practices in place to make sure everyone who uses it goes away happy, that makes sense. But it's worth knowing that alternatives are available. Many of them are more specialist than eBay or don't have the online auction giant's name recognition. Still, you never know when you might want to venture beyond eBay, so let's take a look at your options...

AMAZON MARKETPLACE (WWW.AMAZON.CO.UK)

Here's a familiar name. Amazon is the UK's most popular online retailer, but it doesn't just sell from its own stock; it also has a vast marketplace where traders and private sellers alike can advertise their stuff. The big advantage (other than the obvious amount of traffic the site gets) is that your items are often listed on the same item page as the version Amazon's selling.

So, for example, if you were selling a used copy of *Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone*, you wouldn't create a separate listing; when buyers searched for the book, they'd click on the main product page and see a range of different versions they could buy, including 'used'. Used versions are often cheaper, and bargain hunters may well take advantage.

Fees-wise, though, Amazon takes a pretty hefty chunk. There are no listings fees, but Amazon takes a per-item fee of 75p, plus a referral fee of between 7% and 45%, depending on the item in question. But you do get to dodge PayPal fees, as Amazon handles the card payments and deposits money directly into the seller's account.

AUCTION MY STUFF (WWW.AUCTIONMYSTUFF.CO.UK)

If you reckon you might have something truly valuable on your hands, like a work of art or a family heirloom that's been passed down through the generations, Auction My Stuff is the site for

The screenshot shows the Amazon.co.uk product page for 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' (Book 1) by J.K. Rowling. The page features the book cover, a 4.5-star rating from 1,542 reviews, and several purchase options: Kindle Edition (£0.00), Hardcover (£5.95), Paperback (£3.49), and Audio CD (£26.64). The paperback is highlighted as the best price. A 'FREE Delivery' badge is present. The page also includes a 'Special Offers and Product Promotions' section at the bottom.

▲ The obvious place to turn, Amazon Marketplace lets you reach a huge pool of potential buyers

DID YOU KNOW?

British people spend more money on eBay, per person, than any other country. We're number 1!

The Ones That Didn't Make It

Over the years, other sites have tried to go up against eBay... and failed. For one reason or another, these services ended up closing down before they could get close to snatching eBay's crown:

YAHOO AUCTIONS

Set up in 1998, Yahoo Auctions was a direct competitor to eBay. Its unique selling point? It didn't charge any fees, either from buyers or sellers. Instead, its revenue came from advertising. Unfortunately, in most territories it didn't last long at all. In the UK, Yahoo Auctions closed its doors in 2002, leaving only a holding page to direct would-be users to eBay instead. In the US, the service hung on a little longer, but was retired in 2007. Interestingly, though, it's still active in Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan.

QXL

An early rival, QXL was set up in 1997, and for a while it looked like it was the service eBay had to beat to succeed. Both companies faced controversy and doubt when they first launched, with people unsure that the internet would take off, let alone online auction

services. But by 2004, eBay had become pretty well established, while QXL struggled to turn a profit. In 2008, QXL shut down for good.

TAZBAR

Created with the specific intention of snaffling unhappy eBay users, Tazbar was founded in 2006. The UK-based auction site was initially met with enthusiasm from the online community, and for a while it looked like Tazbar might take off as a legitimate rival to eBay. In the end, though, eBay's longer history and larger audience won out, and Tazbar shut down in 2009 – after just three short years in business.

PLAY.COM

Originally positioned as an alternative to Amazon (with free shipping for all orders!), Play.com hit hard times when the tax loop that allowed it to swerve VAT by being based in the Channel Islands was closed. It changed its business in 2013, becoming an online marketplace, but it still couldn't really compete. It's now Ratuken, a marketplace where only wholesale merchants can sell their wares.



▲ Genuine goods only need apply to Auction My Stuff, whose experts value every item on sale

you. It's specifically targeting collectors of art and antiques, and all items are valued by professionals before they appear on the site.

The downside is that if you want to sell on the site, you'll have to pay a £10 fee to get Auction My Stuff's experts to provide that valuation, but you're

guaranteed a response within 48 hours, and if you think you might have something really special, it might be worth your while. After all, if you don't know what something's worth, it's difficult to put a price on it. Also, there aren't any listings fees, and the site only takes a 10% cut of the final value, so if you manage to find a buyer who's willing to part with a small fortune for your family silver, you'll see most of it in your bank account.

The other advantage to a specialist site like this is that you're more likely to find buyers willing to pay higher prices, because they know they're getting something that's been professionally valued (and therefore isn't likely to be a fake or reproduction). Antiques can be overlooked on eBay, but here they take centre stage.

CQOUT (WWW.CQOUT.CO.UK)

CQOut (or Seek You Out) has been around since 1999, and if it's not as well known or popular as eBay, at least it's survived. It actually does a fairly brisk trade too, with over 2,000,000 listings at any given time. The user interface doesn't look particularly slick, but it's easy to navigate, and there are definitely bargains to be had here.

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

FREDDIE MERCURY'S ROLLS-ROYCE



A Rolls-Royce belonging to Queen singer Freddie Mercury was auctioned on eBay by his sister. Bidding for the car, a silver 1974 Shadow, reached £53,800, but this didn't meet the reserve price.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to Dr Kimberly Young, it's possible to get addicted to eBay. She argues the thrill of winning an auction is similar to the adrenaline rush experienced by gamblers when they win.

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EBAY ALTERNATIVES



▲ CQOut might be worth seeking out

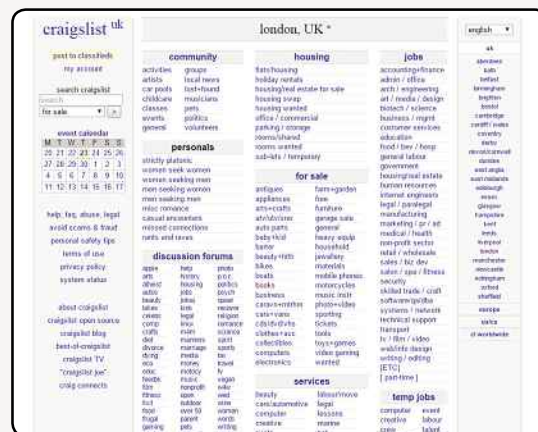
The real selling point here is that the fees are much, much lower than you'd expect to pay on eBay. Although buyers don't need to pay to set up an account, sellers are asked to pay a one-off £2 administration fee. After that, there are no listings fees, and CQOut takes a smaller chunk of the final value as its fee than eBay would: 6.9% (including VAT) for items sold for under £50, and as little as 5.8% for items up to £1,000.

Other fees, for things like setting up a shop or adding an Instant Buy option, are also lower than eBay charges for its equivalents. And CQOut is so confident that its fees are more attractive than the alternative that it offers a comparison calculator, so you can see exactly how much better off you'll be.

CRAIGSLIST (CRAIGSLIST.CO.UK)

It's not as popular in the UK as it is in the US, but Craigslist is still worth a look. The website is extremely basic (the front page is just text on a white background), but once you get deeper in you'll realise you don't need many bells and whistles anyway. Items for sale are divided into a range of categories, and searches can be refined by location, price, as well as whether the seller is an owner or a dealer.

It's free to post adverts on Craigslist, but buyers and sellers are left to sort out payment and exchange of goods themselves. In that respect, Craigslist is less like eBay and more like that notice board at your local supermarket, where people post things for sale and leave their phone number so prospective buyers can get in touch and organise a sale. Craigslist does offer slightly more security than that, because it uses a two-way email relay that means neither the buyer nor the seller see the other's real email address, but it's nowhere near as regulated as eBay. Then again, it's free, so maybe that doesn't matter.

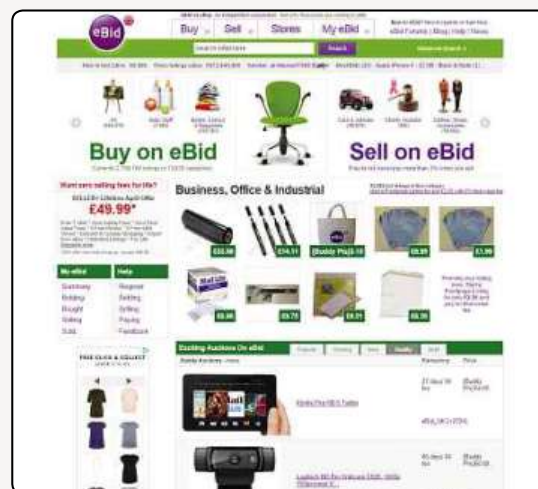


▲ Craigslist: simple but effective

EBID (UK.EBID.NET)

Like CQOut, eBid is a pretty well-trafficked auction site that might not be as busy as eBay, but does pretty well on its own merits. At the time of writing, it boasted almost 70,000 new listings within the past 24 hours, which should give you a fair idea of how popular it really is.

Like many of the most successful eBay alternatives, eBid's big draw is that its fees are extremely low. There are no listings fees, and the highest percentage of a sale eBid will ever claim is 3%. If you're planning on shifting a lot of stock through the site, though, it might be worth investing in a Seller+ Lifetime account. They cost £99.98, but once you've paid that, there are no more fees for selling on eBid - ever. If you're lucky enough to spot one of eBid's occasional Lifetime subscription offers, you might be able to get an even better price than that. Obviously it depends



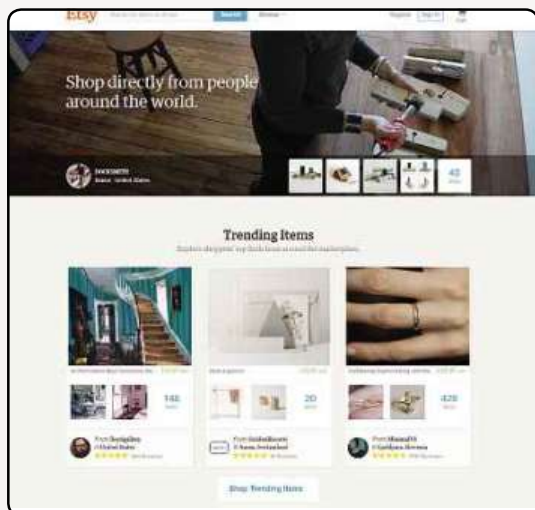
▲ Buy a Lifetime subscription, and you'll never pay final value fees on eBid

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

SOVIET SUBMARINE



Finnish businessman Jari Komulainen twice tried to sell Soviet submarine K-77, in December 1999 and March 2000. Bidding was to start at \$1 million, but no bids were received.



▲ Etsy is pretty strict about what you can sell – only crafts and vintage will do

how much you have to sell, but that subscription could well pay for itself pretty quickly.

ETSY (WWW.ETSY.COM)

This one isn't for selling junk from the attic. Etsy is a marketplace for craftspeople, and the only things that can be sold on the site are handmade items, vintage goods and craft supplies. That obviously limits its usefulness as an eBay alternative, but if you're planning on selling things that fall into those categories, you might be better off here than on eBay. If eBay is like a worldwide car boot sale, Etsy is more like a posh craft fair where you'd look at handmade jewellery, consider buying some hand illustrated greetings cards and then eat some homemade cake.

If you're the crafty type, you might find Etsy's fees more favourable than eBay's: every listing costs \$0.20 (about 13p), and then there's a comparatively tiny 3.5% transaction fee when you make a sale. Listings stay active for four months, after which you'll have to pay to renew them. There's also a fee for using Etsy's payment platform, Direct Checkout, which for UK users is 4% plus 20p. That's roughly comparable to PayPal's fees. So it's not the cheapest, but Etsy is very popular with people wanting to buy original crafts, making it well worth joining if you're arty.

FREecycle (WWW.FREecycle.ORG)

As the name suggests, this isn't going to be an option for anyone who's planning to make a living selling on eBay. You won't make money on Freecycle, but if you're just looking to shift some bits and pieces, it might be useful. And if you're feeling lucky, you might also find someone waiting to give away whatever it is you're looking for too.

Freecycle is basically a huge network of local classified ads, but everything is listed for free. So to get started, you search for your location to find a Freecycle site near you. Then you'll see a list of all the ads. Users can either post with something they want to give away or something they want, so you'll see ads for free children's toys sitting alongside pleas for free washing machines.

Freecycle runs on volunteers, and the forum moderators are also enthusiastic volunteers, so be careful when using Freecycle and watch out for con artists trying to get you to part with money for delivery of free stuff. With a bit of common sense, it can be a fantastic resource.

FACEBOOK (WWW.FACEBOOK.COM)

Obviously Facebook isn't a dedicated sales site, but there are a lot of people buying and selling on the social network. Your first stop might be your own profile, especially if you have a lot of friends with similar interests who might want to take DVDs or children's clothes off your hands.

Beyond that, there are a lot of community-specific groups set up on Facebook for buying and selling. Try searching the name of your town plus



▲ Not a money maker, but Freecycle has its uses



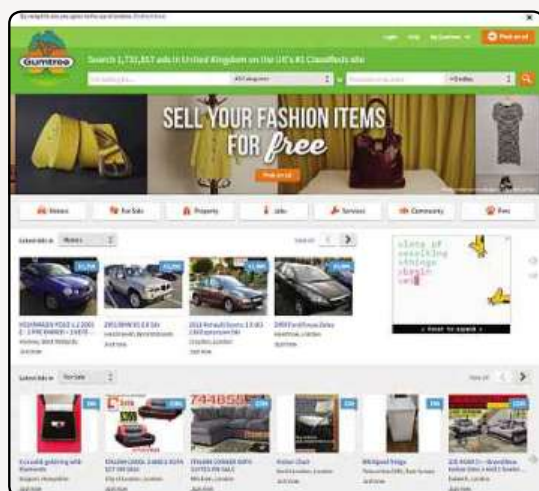
▲ You might not immediately think of it, but it's possible to buy and sell on Facebook

DID YOU KNOW?

In May 2013, an original VHS tape of John Carpenter's horror classic *Halloween* was sold on eBay for a whopping \$13,220. It's not clear why the bidder thought it was worth so much; maybe he or she was just a really big fan?

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▲ Gumtree is classified ads site that's totally free to use

'for sale' in the search bar, and you'll find all sorts of groups selling all sorts of things. Exactly which one you want to join obviously depends on what it is you want to buy or sell, but with a bit of searching you're likely to find your niche.

Again, this isn't one for would-be business people (though they might want to consider setting up a Facebook page to promote their company!), but now that we live so much of our lives online, networks like Facebook have replaced more traditional ways of trading goods like jumble sales, so it's worth checking out.

GUMTREE (WWW.GUMTREE.COM)

Another classified ads site, Gumtree is a valuable resource for buying and selling all sorts of stuff. Alongside ads for house shares and jobs, there are listings for all kinds of items, from electronics to fashion. There's also a freebies section, where you can browse the stuff people are giving away, plus a Stuff Wanted section and a Swap Shop. The Swap Shop is especially worth a look, even if you think you're not looking for anything in particular. People have been known to list all kinds of things, including a house swap that offered a French cottage in exchange for a home in the UK!

In most cases, posting ads on Gumtree is free. There might be a small delay between submitting an ad and seeing it appear live on the site, though. Gumtree estimates that it shouldn't take longer than four hours, but if there's a backlog, it might take longer.

The main drawback of Gumtree and most of the other classifieds style sites is that they rely on being able to connect buyers and sellers who are geographically close to one another and can do business in person. That does rather limit the

pool of potential buyers you're advertising to and can also mean you might not be able to find the thing you're looking for in a conveniently located place. It's not a dealbreaker, just something to be aware of.

MUSICMAGPIE (WWW.MUSICMAGPIE.CO.UK)

Want to get money for your CDs, DVDs, games or electronics? The quickest and easiest way is to sell them to a service like Music Magpie. All you need to do is tell the site what it is you want to sell, and Music Magpie will generate a price. That price will be affected by various factors, including how old the stuff you want to sell is and whether they're already inundated with it. So if you're looking to get rid of a copy of *50 Shades Of Grey*, for example, you might find Music Magpie won't offer you much for it.

Once you have your prices, you package your stuff up and send it via free courier service to the Music Magpie warehouse. Then you get your money – it'll pay by either bank transfer or cheque, or if you're feeling really generous, you can choose to donate the fee to charity.

It's all a lot easier and less stressful than going through the process of listing everything on eBay, waiting for bids and then sending items out one by one to different buyers. The problem is you won't get very much money for your stuff. If decluttering your home is the most important part of the process, though, Music Magpie might be the one for you.

PRELOVED (WWW.PRELOVED.CO.UK)

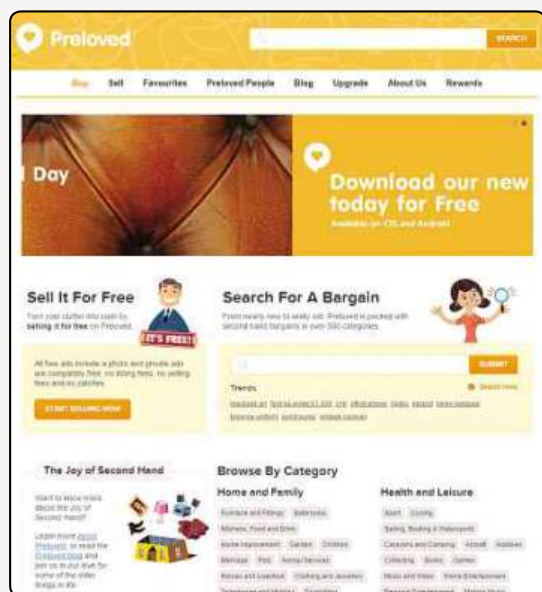
Of all the similar listings sites, Preloved is by far the slickest and best designed. There's something reassuring about it too: who wouldn't want



▲ Magpies like things other than just music, apparently

DID YOU KNOW?

When David Cameron had his bicycle stolen, someone opened a spoof auction on eBay. Part of the description read, 'It is BIG and BLUE, and despite looking quite well balanced, it leans oddly to the right!'



▲ All kinds of second-hand goodies are for sale on Preloved

something that had been loved? Underneath that shiny veneer, though, you're looking at another classified ads site, where you can list whatever second-hand stuff you want to pass on.

There are no fees or charges associated with using Preloved, and it's quick and simple to post a new ad. The site boasts more than 5.7 million users, and in 2014 over £1.4 billion worth of stuff was listed on the site. So we're talking about a pretty massive network of people buying and

selling all over the UK. And while there's nothing particularly innovative about the basic functionality of Preloved, it does have some cute features, like the Time Machine that lets you browse listings based on the age of the items for sale. Ideal, if you're an antiques lover!

As an added bonus, Preloved has a whole section of discount codes available for users, which give them money off new stuff at various retailers. Can't argue with that.

ZAPPER (WWW.ZAPPER.CO.UK)

A lot like Music Magpie, this is another one of those sites that'll accept a big box of your old stuff in exchange for cash. Zapper's main selling point is that it's easy to list your stuff, because all you have to do is download the app to your smartphone and then scan in the barcodes on your books, DVDs, CDs and so on. Zapper will accept electronics in all kinds of conditions, even if they're broken, though you do have to declare that before you get the price estimate from it.

Although Zapper and Music Magpie (and other similar sites) look the same, they don't necessarily offer the same sorts of rates for things, so you might want to shop around to make sure you're getting the best deal for your stuff. However, that kind of defeats the object of getting rid of everything in one job lot! Still, it can be disappointing to find out that your prized old mobile phone is only worth a few pennies. And then you might end up back at eBay after all.



▲ Skip the pain of listings with Zapper

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

A ROUND OF GOLF WITH TIGER WOODS



In 2002, the Tiger Woods Foundation auctioned a round of golf with Woods himself and three other golfers at the Isleworth Country Club in Windermere, Florida. The auction raised \$425,000 for charity.



Chapter 8

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Reviews

There are lots of tools available to help make your eBay experience better, faster and easier...

Mobile Apps

EBAY

iOS, Android, BlackBerry, Windows Phone

★★★★★☆☆
Free

No phone is complete without the official eBay app, which allows you to manage your eBay auctions wherever you are. It's available for almost every kind of smartphone or tablet on the market, so no matter what kind of mobile device you're using, you should be able to get this app – but there are some differences in features between the different versions.

Every version of the app lets users search for listings, access their My eBay account, use PayPal to buy things and leave feedback on completed sales. Most also let users create listings, including uploading photos. However, only Android users can take advantage of voice-enabled search, and BlackBerry users can't use the built-in barcode scanner. The lack of some of the more advanced settings might be annoying if you're a regular eBay users with anything other than an Android or iOS phone, but for the most part, this app should have you covered.

EBAY FASHION

iOS
★★★★★
Free

Over the years, eBay has changed – and far from just

being a depository for people's junk, it is now akin to an out-of-town shopping centre with items of all description, new and old.

Recently, eBay has been pushing the fact that clothes sell well on the auction site, and it has been giving fashion its own section and branding. The eBay Fashion app is the smartphone offering, which lets you take a photo of anything you fancy and then search for clothes in similar colours or patterns. In the app description, eBay suggests you could photograph a sunset and then find a dress to match, which is adorably whimsical, but there are plenty of more practical ways to use this smart feature.

Of course, you could just use the app to buy and sell clothes, but that would be less fun, wouldn't it? Either way, fashionistas will love this.

EBAY MOTORS

iOS
★★★★☆☆
Free

Cars and motorbikes have long been big sellers on eBay, and hundreds of thousands of people have found a new motor this way.

With the eBay Motors app, you can see full-screen photos of cars and you can also search for parts. You can also share information with other people. The garage function is handy, giving you the option of storing information about the vehicles you like and, as you'd expect,

buying is the name of the game, and you have all the options at your disposal to do this.

Unfortunately, you can't sell via the app, but you can get access to new episodes of *The World's Fastest Car Show*, which will pass the time until you can get back to your computer and list your car for sale anyway.

EBAY WIDGETS

Android
★★★★★☆☆
Free

The beauty of Android is that you can have widgets running on the home page of your device.

Rather than having to open an app to get the very latest, you can see it all happening in front of your eyes whenever you glance at your phone. eBay Widgets can be configured to display different information: either notifications of any reminders and messages you've got, shortcuts to the various bits of eBay you're most likely to want quick access to or a summary of the best deals available that day. Whether you're more of a buyer or a seller, it's not hard to see how those quick access options could come in handy.

The widget works in conjunction with the official eBay app, so you'll need to download and install that first, but once it's all set up, you'll find it's incredibly easy to keep on top of all your auctions. If you're a serious eBay buyer, you will want this on your phone.

FAT FINGERS FOR EBAY

iOS, Android



Free

Although eBay might now have lots of big, high-street brands taking advantage of its 'Buy Now' facility, it's still chock-full of individual sellers just like you. And since anyone can make a mistake, that means there are plenty of listings with typos in the titles. That makes those listings harder to find – and increases the chance that you'll find a bargain that no-one else has spotted..

However, searching for typos is time-consuming and annoying, which is where an app like Fat Fingers comes in. It'll scour eBay listings for common misspellings of whatever you're after, digging out iPods, camaras and 'Disney' products that other bidders might have missed. Once you've found your bargain, you can bid on it through the app.

Thoughtfully, Fat Fingers offers the option to turn off photos in search listings, which helps you avoid burning through your phone's data limit.

LOCAL EBAY DEALS FINDER

Android



Free

Created by the clever people at MoneySavingExpert, this local deals app uses location information from your mobile device to find you the very best local deals on eBay. It searches based on the seller's location, looking specifically for collection-only items. That drastically cuts down on the competition, since only locals or people willing to travel will bid on these items – so if you are local, that means you've got a good chance of picking up a bargain.

eBay doesn't normally allow you to search only among collection-only items, so if you're after something bulky, this app could help you get a good deal by dramatically reducing the number of listings you'll need to trawl through.

You can also search by entering your postcode and specifying how far you're willing to travel, if you don't want to use GPS or aren't at home while you're searching. Very, very clever stuff indeed.

MYIBIDDER

iOS, Android



Free or £5.99 for the Pro version on Android; £1.49 on iOS

While many eBay items are Buy It Now, the auctions are most fun, and there are still plenty of them to get your teeth into. Using Mybidder Bid Sniper on your phone or tablet lets you snipe items – that is, using the app to place a bid seconds before it ends in order to bag it. Instead of relentlessly watching an item and hoping to get in there at the last possible moment, you set a top fee you're willing to pay and get the app to place that bid for you right at the end and hope it's enough to win. Mybidder reckons it processes over 150,000 snipes every week, which means if you're not planning to snipe a particular auction, someone else might be...

PAYPAL

iOS, Android, Windows Phone



Free

PayPal is such an essential part of the whole eBay process, it follows that you will want to have the PayPal app on your phone or tablet. You can quickly check your

balance and see your most recently activity, and you can also tap on each entry in order to see more about the transaction. As you would expect, you can send money and request cash from others. The iPhone app has been given a snazzy makeover, and the Android app works with NFC-enabled phones. All in all, no matter which phone you have, this will nicely nestle on it. And if you live in the United States, then you can snap a photo of your cheques and add money direct from the app. Bonus.

PHOTOSHOP EXPRESS

iOS



Free

If you're creating eBay listings on your phone, chances are you're using your phone's camera to take the photos. And that means there's a very good chance your photos could do with a bit of editing before you post them. You don't need to go through all the faff of transferring them to a computer and editing them there before transferring them back and posting them, though – that would defeat the whole point of using a mobile device in the first place. No, all you need to do, if you're using an iPhone or iPad, is pick up this free mobile version of Adobe's image editing program.

Photoshop Express makes it easy to perform even elaborate editing tasks on your mobile device: you can crop, rotate or flip your photos, then adjust the exposure, brightness and contrast levels or even add borders to give your images a bit more impact. And you can do it all for free. There are in-app purchases available, which give you extra editing functions, but you don't need to buy those unless you want to.

POCKET AUCTIONS FOR EBAY

Android



Free

If, for some reason, you don't want to use the official eBay app on your Android device, you could do worse than trying out Pocket Auctions instead. The app won eBay's star developer award, so it's got the official seal of approval, and if you're looking to buy, it's pretty straightforward. You can search listings by keyword or by using the built-in barcode scanner; you can also see popular items or new deals. There's a live chat function and bid timers so you can keep on top of everything that's going on. The menus are colour-coordinated and easy to navigate. The only downside, really, is that you can't sell things using this app – it's purely for buying stuff. And the official eBay app is so good we're not really sure why you'd need another one. Still, if you do want an alternative, try it out.

REDLASER BARCODE SCANNER, DEAL FINDER AND QR CODE READER

iOS, Android



Free

Although you'd never know it from the name, this shopping app was developed by eBay. It's designed to find you bargains while you're out shopping in the real world. You just use your mobile device to scan a barcode or QR code and the app figures out what the item is and searches for it in other stores. That means you can find out if it's cheaper or on special offer somewhere else, without having to trawl every shop on the high street to find it.

You can also use it to scan things you already own and create lists – for example, you could create a digital record of every CD in your collection or scan your kids' toys to find others like them.

And, of course, you can always head to eBay afterwards.

WHAT'S IT WORTH?

Android



Free

One of the tricks of posting an item on eBay is working out just how much you should be getting for it. It's also worth figuring out how much items are going for if you're buying too, so you can be sure that you're not paying over the odds. With What's It Worth?, you can view prices by the day of the week, see the median and price range and filter by condition. In other words, you can do more than enough to find an exact match to the item you're selling or buying. Since knowledge is power, you can use that information to make sure you're not getting ripped off – or use it to sell your stuff quickly by undercutting the competition! Either way, it's always worth knowing the value of things.

Buying And Searching Tools

AUCTION AUTO BIDDER

www.auctionautobidder.com



\$17-27 (£11.24 – £17.84, approx)

For any device with a web browser

If you want to give people as little time as possible to beat your bid on eBay, then you want to place it as late as possible. That's a job that Auction Auto Bidder offers to take off your hands, among many other tasks. There's a lot packed into it.

It's a collection of tools that allows you to watch, favourite and view certain listings, and you can also program the software to put in a late bid, in the same manner as sniping software. The package also includes a web browser, which it encourages you to use, but it's not compulsory.

It's a good collection of tools, here, and once you've tweaked the program so that it defaults to eBay's UK site, there's a good chance you'll find it all quite useful.

AUCTION INTELLIGENCE

www.auctionintelligence.com



Free

Online service

Searching eBay is easy enough, but one thing you can't control is other people's typing or spelling abilities. For example, searching for 'PlayStation 3' will yield plenty of results, but you'll miss listings for such incorrect entries as 'Plastation' or 'Playtation', possibly losing out on some great bargains.

Auction Intelligence tries to address this problem, and using the service you can return incorrectly typed results for the item you're looking for. Simply type in the correct item name and then click the search button and you'll see a list of incorrectly typed entries and, hopefully, some good deals too.

A useful little tool, the service would score higher if it let you enter search criteria with more than one word, but it's still handy.

AUCTION LOTWATCH

www.auctionlotwatch.co.uk



Free

Online service

Saving precious time is paramount these days, and while some things

can't be rushed, checking for the latest bargains on eBay needn't be a long and arduous task. In fact, you can search for items without even going to the website or downloading any new software.

A quick visit to Auction Lotwatch will grant you access to a speedy and easy search tool that can scour eBay, as well as a few other auction sites, in seconds, returning with a list of applicable items. Once the list has been retrieved, you can then view the items, prices and time left, and you can also click the direct link to the eBay page itself.

This is a great way to quickly view and compare auctions, and there's even an option to show common misspellings for the item you've searched for, so you can widen the search and include items you may usually miss due to typos.

As Auction Lotwatch is a website-based service, you don't need any extra software and can access it from anywhere. However, although useful, the search results aren't as in depth as a dedicated program, and the difference between searching this way and using eBay itself isn't that great. Still, if you want to compare auctions on eBay to similar additions on other auction sites, you should find this useful.

AUCTION REMIND

www.auctionremind.com



Free

Online service

If you fancy using your email inbox to gather search results, Auction Remind may be for you. This is search automation of a different type. Register, then log in and launch a search, and the service does the virtual legwork for you.

Whenever it turns up items that meet your criteria, it'll fire off an email with the details.

The benefit of this is that you can retrieve finds from anywhere you can access your email and you don't need to be at your own desk to learn of bargains. The downside, of course, is that you have to access your mail to receive results.

The Auction Remind site states a very firm privacy policy but, nevertheless, a web-based disposable email account may be in order. It also said you can cancel your account at any time, and it's an interesting free option to consider.

AUCTIONFINAL

www.auctionfinal.com
★★★★☆☆

Free
Online service

Gazumping other eBay bidders at the last second is one of the best ways to get the items you desire on the world's biggest auction site, but this can be tricky at the best of times. Another way to get a good deal is to seek out auctions with no interest and to make a token bid before it closes.

AuctionFinal is an internet tool that gives you this ability. Using the search engine provided on the site, you can choose any eBay site (from all the global eBay outlets), choose the time left before the auction finishes and select a specific category (including 'all'). The engine will then return a list of auctions matching your criteria that are about to close, giving you the chance to win auctions for next to nothing.

Results include item descriptions, end time, time left and the price, and you can click on any results to go straight to the eBay page.

This is a very useful tool for snooping out bargains, but unfortunately, you can't manually type in actual product

criteria and can only search via eBay categories. Still, it's a handy trick to have up your sleeve, even with this limitation.

AUCTION SIEVE

www.auctionsieve.com
★★★★☆☆

Free
PC/Mac

As the author of this tool states, searching eBay can be a very hit-and-miss affair – and also a time-consuming one. Finding the best items and weeding out those you're not interested in is a pain. With this program, you'll be able to filter the results, separating the wheat from the chaff.

To use the tool, you first need to build your preferences and individual searches. This is done by choosing categories to create your 'sieves' and using them to filter out the first level of unwanted items. You can then add 'catch words' to your searches to further trim down results to items that contain these words. To ditch items you're not interested in, you add words to the 'Trash Words' list and any items that contain words in this list will be removed.

This is a simple system, but one that, if handled correctly, can make finding items you're looking for much easier. However, it can also hint at sledgehammer tactics and, if you're not careful, you can filter out too many results with the wrong word filters.

AUCTION TYPO

www.auction-typo.com
★★★★☆☆

Free
Online service

As with many similar services offered online, Auction Typo can

help find eBay sales where the seller has misspelled the item description, usually meaning that you'd never see the result in your listings.

By typing in the correct spelling and then clicking the search button, this website's search engine will scour eBay for any similar, misspelled results, and it will then take you to the corresponding eBay search results page. All correctly spelled results can be excluded, so you can browse through just the items that you might not normally see.

You can filter results by choosing PayPal or Buy It Now items only, and you can elect to exclude words to further limit the results.

EBAY EXTENSION FOR GOOGLE CHROME

chrome.google.com/webstore
★★★★☆☆

Free
Google Chrome

If you're one of the 310 million people in the world who uses Google's Chrome browser instead of Internet Explorer or Firefox, you might find this official eBay extension useful. Once installed, the extension keeps you signed into eBay in your browser, even when you don't have an eBay tab open.

You can see, at a click, all your active auctions, how long they have left and whether or not you're winning. It's also easy and quick to take a look at your eBay history and current deals. A search bar at the top lets you search eBay without needing to visit the website, and you can customise the alerts so you get a pop-up notification whenever anything happens on your account – so if you're bidding, you'll get instant updates on your

auctions, and if you're selling, you can get alerts when someone's bidding on your items or if an auction is ending soon.

If you want to be able to keep tabs on your eBay account without needing to actually keep a tab open, this is a convenient and easy way to do so.

GOOFBID

www.goofbid.com
★★★★☆☆

Free
Online service

Using eBay would be much more straightforward if everyone always remembered to spell-check their listings, but then we'd miss the thrill of stumbling across a bargain no one else has noticed because the description is misspelled. Goofbid is yet another tool designed to help you dig out those elusive deals: visit the website and you'll see a range of search boxes, each of which can be used to search eBay listings in different ways. For example, use the pink misspelling search to find badly typed listings or use the blue 'not in title' search to find badly formatted listings where key details have been buried in the item description rather than plainly obvious in the title. Using these searches, you might find difficult-to-track items you'd otherwise have skipped over.

Goofbid has a few other tricks up its sleeve too, offering a sniper tool and ways to find sellers' histories – worth doing if you're buying something expensive or if there's some other reason you find yourself wondering whether a seller is really trustworthy.

The site is colourful and well designed in a reassuring kind of a way, and there are so many different search tools here that it might be worth bookmarking this one for future reference. As an

added bonus, the Goofbid forums are pretty busy, so if you have any problems or questions, there's likely to be someone there who can help you out.

INVISIBLE AUCTIONS

www.invisible-auctions.com



Free

Online service

Using Invisible Auctions, you'll be able to get the upper hand on other bidders by digging out listings with misspelled titles. The Invisible Auctions website allows you to search for particular items, such as a brand name or specific product, on the global eBay sites, and the results supplied include the misspelled versions for the item you're looking for.

Additional options in the search include the ability to view Buy It Now items only, eBay Shops only and completed auctions. You can also search in both the title and description. You can filter results to wrong spelling, right spelling or both right and wrong, but the wrong spelling option is the best one to use to find better deals.

There are plenty of similar tools on the internet and Invisible Auctions is comparable to many of them. However, it's still a useful service to have when you're planning to purchase any items from the world's biggest auction site, so take a look.

OS X DASHBOARD WIDGET

auctionmonitor.net/widget.php



Free

Mac OS X

Designed for the Apple Mac, this widget doubles up as both an eBay search bar and an auction monitor.

When collapsed, the search bar functions like any other, and you can quickly browse eBay for any items of interest. By clicking the expand arrow, you can unveil a full list of any items that you're currently bidding on or watching, as well as those you're selling on the site. This information includes the prices and remaining time. The program also links to your 'My eBay' page and is updated automatically.

Very similar to the Vista Sidebar Gadget (produced by the same team), this is a simple tool that provides simplified information. There's no advanced features as such, but for speedy updates of your eBay activities, this is a good tool to have.

Listing Tools

ALIENFILES

www.alienfiles.net



£39.99; free trial

PC/Mac

Ask any kind of seller, whether a shopkeeper, market trader or eBay merchant and they'll all agree that one of the most important things to consider when selling items is appearance. This applies to both the item you're selling and yourself (or your shop). People are far more likely to buy a product that looks good, is presented well and is sold by someone who clearly knows what they're doing. So investing in a tool that can improve the look of your listings is a good idea.

Enter AlienFiles. No, this isn't a secret FBI department investigating extraterrestrial occurrences, but is instead a suite of tools that can give your item's listing a helping of sale bling. Using this program, you can change listings from simple text and images, to advertisements that feature image galleries, feedback displays, scrolling banners, Flash adverts and even embedded video

clips. These listings are formatted in attractive templates, which can look far better than the usual white background, blocks of text and small images.

The program doesn't require any knowledge of HTML or other coding. It uses a simple interface that looks similar to a word processor and it even includes a spell-checker, so you can nail those ever present typos before committing anything to eBay. Most sections of the tool use a similarly straightforward interface, with plenty of guidance and tabbed options. Even adding a map to your location is easy.

There are no image hosting costs and you can also add other files, such as Microsoft Office documents (.doc, .xls, etc.) and video clips use the now familiar YouTube Flash player embedded into your listings. All your creations can be saved, so you can use them or edit them later for additional items.

AlienFiles is an accomplished and intuitive tool, and using it should be a cakewalk for even the most inexperienced computer or eBay user. More advanced users with HTML knowledge won't get much from the program, though, as they'll be able to achieve the same results for free.

AUCTIVA

www.auctiva.com



From \$3.95 a month (£2.61 approx)

PC

Auctiva is a massive suite of eBay-related tools. Among its offerings are over 1,800 listing templates, a bulk-listing tool, a sales management tool, inventory management software and an auto-emailing tool. The listings tool is probably the handiest of the lot, since it lets you schedule in your listings without having to pay eBay's

scheduling fees (particularly handy if you sell a lot of items!), and the templates can make your listings look more professional and more appealing with very little extra effort.

Not convinced Auctiva is for you? You don't have to fork out any money to find out, because there's a free 30-day trial available. It won't be worth the money if you're only an occasional eBay seller, but if you sell in bulk or want to turn eBay selling into a full-time business, it could be really helpful.

GARAGESALE

www.iwascoding.com



From \$39.99 (£26.43 approx) for the single user version Mac OS X

GarageSale 6.4 offers an alternative to eBay's own, often slow, listing tool and is tailored for eBay users who access the site on Macs. Versions are also available too for iPad and iPhone/iPod Touch.

The program itself makes full use of the usual, attractive Mac-style interface, and within this you can easily put together appealing ads for your items. Text can be added and formatted, font styles can be changed and images can be placed and manipulated.

The program features free image hosting, 140 templates, a built-in scheduler for automatically starting auctions and compatibility with iPhoto, so you can access your photos directly from the service for use in your listings. There's also a messaging system and full support for eBay stores. Newly added Twitter support, embedding of YouTube videos and Bonjour network sharing are also among the features.

GarageSale is a slick program with excellent support, including tutorial videos, FAQs and PDF manual resources and the newest improvements make it an even more useful sales tool.

LISTING FACTORY 2013

www.auctionlistingcreator.com



\$49.95 (£33.01 approx) Standard, \$89.95 (£59.44 approx) Pro PC – Windows XP or later

Listing Factory 2013 is a step-by-step system to creating eBay listings. Like many other listing applications, it's designed to make creating listings easier than using eBay's standard set of tools. It does this by letting users enter text and import images, to then tweak and arrange them into an attractive ad.

It comes with a range of templates, which can be tailored to your own needs, with images, galleries and other customisable content being available.

The interface is clean and efficient and all the options are clearly displayed, rather than hidden away in awkward menus. Also, some of the supplied templates are well designed and implemented, offering some of the best examples seen in any listing app.

Along with the easy-to-use editor, the program offers free image hosting (100MB with Standard and 400MB for Pro), no image dimension restrictions, no monthly fees and one licence can be used on two PCs.

Listing Factory 2013 is a great little tool and one that's been thought out well. All the tools included are useful, and the templates (and the ability to edit them so easily) are a welcome resource. It's a little expensive for this type of application, though, especially for the Pro

version, which doesn't really offer all that much more than the Standard package.

Sniping Tools

AUCTIONRAPTOR

www.auctionraptor.com



\$4.95 (£3.27 approx) per month, \$52.95 (£35 approx) per year; one month free Online service

AuctionRaptor is a nicely put together service that aims to be simple and user friendly. The service, which is free for the first month, offers unlimited bids on as many items as you like at once and email notifications to let you know if your bid is too low to win the auctions, giving you the chance to raise your game.

You can utilise item grouping to bid on the same item from a number of sellers (with the other bids being cancelled if you win one of them) and you can add items to your AuctionRaptor account while browsing eBay. Best of all, AuctionRaptor can place bids as little as two seconds away from the closing time, giving you a great chance of winning (internet traffic permitting).

While the subscription price is a little more than many competing services, AuctionRaptor's simple but effective features are usually worth it, and the last-second sniping is a real bonus that beats most other services hands down.

BIDNAPPER

www.bidnapper.com



£7.99 per month standard subscription; £19.99 (ten snipes) £36.99 (25 snipes). Online service

Bidnapper is a flexible and powerful online bidding service that supports not only eBay, but a wide variety of other auction sites (more than 40 in total). As you'd expect, the service allows you to place bids automatically during the last few seconds of an auction, and you can specify your maximum bid amount and also protect your username from searches, to stop your competition from locating you.

Bids can be changed or cancelled at any time and using the tabbed interface of the service, as well as the included searches, makes it easy to stay on top of things, regardless of how many auctions you're taking part in. The service's interface relays plenty of information about each bid, along with the product image and you can make notes as well, should you need to.

Bidnapper has won plenty of praise for its successes, and it's a good service for users of multiple auction types. The payment methods are flexible too, and you don't need to be tied down to a subscription, which is a bonus.

EZ SNIPER

www.ezsniper.com



\$11.99 (£7.92 approx) per month subscription, ten snipes for \$21.99 (£14.53 approx). Online service

Billing itself as one of the cheapest sniping tools around, EZ Sniper features a flexible pricing plan, with last-second sniping for as little as £0.05 per go. Although it charges 1% of your winning bid on top of that, it isn't too bad and should you be unsuccessful, you don't pay a thing.

All bids can be changed or cancelled as you see fit and all transactions are totally secure, with your privacy guaranteed.

After a simple registration process, you can use the online applet to add snipes and monitor the status of your auctions.

EZ Sniper has a free trial that grants you three snipes, and if you register and then recommend the service to your friends, you'll be eligible for the free service, with a whole month of free bids on offer.

GIXEN

www.gixen.com



Free

Online service

Sniping services usually have a lot in common and similar features, as well as a price. Using them usually requires a subscription. Not so with Gixen. This is a totally free sniping tool that offers the same features as many paid-for options.

Using Gixen, you can snipe auctions in the last few seconds and are able to use group bids to make sure you grab that elusive item. The number of bids you can place at any one time using Gixen is ten, which is less than most other services. Considering it's free, though, you can't complain.

The developer claims that bids using Gixen are 99.5% reliable, which is a high level indeed and, should you wish to, you can pay for a Gixen 'mirror', which sends two snipes at the same time, effectively doubling your chances of getting that bid in at the last possible second. A downloadable desktop management Gixen tool is now available too, incidentally, also free.

MYIBIDDER

www.myibidder.com



Free web-based service; \$14.99 (£9.90 approx) for the standalone version
PC/Mac

Bid sniping is, of course, a very popular method of nailing that elusive deal on auction sites. Many eBay users now make the most of services that offer this essential trick for snagging items, and if you want to ensure that you stand a chance of winning some of the more hotly pursued deals, then tools like Myibidder are very useful indeed.

Myibidder is a bid sniping and auction management tool. Using it, you can manage and organise your current auction activity, keeping track of time left, current prices and more. Integrated into the service is a sniping tool that can be set to increase your bid on an item automatically should you be outbid. Simply set your maximum bid and the program will do the rest and attempt to sneak that all-important last-minute bid in for you.

Myibidder is available as a free (donations are welcome) service, using extensions, shortcuts and custom buttons for Firefox, Internet Explorer and Opera browsers. If you'd rather use the service locally as a client application, however, you can. You can download a Windows application that includes all the web service's features and free updates. The local version has the benefit of speedier performance, since it's installed on your PC, and it may be a good choice for heavy eBay users. You do have to pay for it, though.

POWERSNIPE

www.powersnipe.com



\$45.99 (£30.39 approx) per year
Online service

PowerSnipe has won awards from various websites for its reliability, and it's an accessible online service that comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee, so sure is its

developer that it will help you win eBay auctions.

As is standard, the program only needs an auction number and maximum amount (as well as your user details, of course) and it will then attempt to outbid other users by sniping at the last possible second.

Daily updates are sent to you by the service and you can also use it to snipe multiple auctions, including group bids.

You can view your full order history via the Auction Manager and bids can be altered or cancelled should you wish (up to two minutes before the end of the auction).

For under £30 per year and unlimited snipes, PowerSnipe is a good service to try if you do a lot of eBay bidding. However, occasional users may do best with a token-based service.

Seller Tools

BOLDCHAT

www.boldchat.com



Free – or from \$99 (£65.46 approx) per year
PC – Windows

The best eBay sellers know that customer service goes beyond packaging and a thank you email. Anything you can do to build confidence in your products and services will go a long way towards a successful business.

Email contact is fine and marketing tools like newsletters can add a professional touch. Although those options can be fast, though, they're not nearly as instant and accessible as being able to chat live with potential buyers.

Adding a chat feature to your eBay store, you can quickly answer questions, confirm details and firm up sales that may be lost

in the slower to and fro of typed communications. Boldchat offers a wide range of seller solutions from \$99 (approximately £64) per year for infrequent sellers to \$999 (roughly £639.68) per year for serious sellers. It's also just launched a completely free version, which doesn't have anywhere near as many features as the paid version, but it might be better than nothing and is definitely worth checking out before forking over any money.

If you have the resources to have someone available to chat about your items and terms, you may also want to add Boldchat to your sales team.

COUNTEROFFER

www.merlinsoftware.com

★★★★☆

\$19.95 (£13.19 approx)

PC only

eBay's Best Offer feature is an interesting quirk of the site: it can help you sell something that you might otherwise be stuck with, but it also involves having to barter with potential customers rather than just specifying either a firm Buy It Now price or a minimum bid price. CounterOffer is a piece of software that aims to make Best Offer a bit simpler to use for sellers: once installed, you can set a percentage of a price you're willing to accept, and then CounterOffer can accept or reject buyers' offers on your behalf. Or it can – wait for it – make a counter offer, based on what you're willing to accept, which the buyer can then decide to accept or not. It's basically doing all your haggling for you, and lets you make your listings look a bit more attractive to the kind of customer who's really determined to get a good deal.

EBAY SALES REPORTS PLUS

pages.ebay.com/sellerinformation/sellingresources/salesreports_overview.html

★★★★☆

Free

Online service

Sales Reports Plus is a free service offered by eBay itself – so why miss out by not signing up?

It's quick to sign up using your existing eBay login. Once you've subscribed, just click on 'My Subscriptions and Sales Reports' in your eBay dashboard to see the reports. You'll also get an email every time a new report is generated, so you can make sure you're up to date with what's happening with your sales.

The reports incorporate a lot of different data. They're divided into four sections: Sales Summary, Sales by Category, Sales by Format and Fees Summary, so you get an overview of your total sales, the average price for those sales and what percentage of your listings were successful. You can also see which categories are most successful, which may help you decide which category you should list your items under in future (handy, since the more categories you use, the higher the fees you have to pay – so why bother using categories that aren't shifting stock?).

Other info included in the reports includes the percentage of your sales that were made through auctions and fixed prices and you'll see what fees you're paying too. It can be easy to lose track of how much eBay is actually making off your business, so having an at-a-glance summary can be helpful, especially if you're trying to decide whether it's worth paying for a shop subscription.

There's a basic version of Sales Reports too, but since both

services are free, you might as well take advantage of the more detailed version. If you're only an occasional seller, these reports are unlikely to provide any useful information, but if you're running a whole shop, the insights could be invaluable.

ECAL AUCTION FEE CALCULATOR (FOR EBAY UK AND PAYPAL)

ecal.altervista.org/en/fee_calculator

★★★★☆

Free

Online service

This online service provides free calculators to compute and compare listing fees and costs on many eBay sites. The UK page is dedicated to the fee structures for users in the United Kingdom and has you choose from Auction, Buy It Now and eBay Store format tabs. It also includes a special facility to add or change VAT for European Union countries.

Simply enter the details of the intended sale item, (or Multi-item Dutch Auctions) and tick the listing upgrades and picture services you're interested in, such as Gallery or scheduled, highlighted or bold listings, and the costs will be tallied up for you.

If they seem too high to get the profit you're hoping for, you can make changes that alter the features of your listing and affect your bottom line. Having this info in advance helps to plan for the cost of every item and to control each sale.

Frequent sellers should be using fee calculators on a regular basis. This is a good, up-to-date choice for the infrequent seller or if you're working away from your desk and need access to a service to plan sales strategies away from home or the office.

FROO! CROSS SELL

www.froo.com/xsell

★★★★☆

Free

Online service

Store layout in the real world can be crafty. Store managers know where their customers will be looking for a certain kind of product and can carefully arrange other related products nearby in the hope of encouraging an impulse buy. Online, that's not always so simple, and though you might hope an eBay user who's found one of your auctions will click through to the rest of your wares, they don't always bother.

That's what Froo! Cross Sell is hoping to change, though. It lets you create scrolling galleries of your other items for sale that you can embed into your listings. That way, while your potential customer is reading about the first item of yours they're interested in, something else might catch their eye, and then instead of buying one thing from you, they're buying two or three – or more...

The gallery is customisable, with lots of designs to choose from, so you can make sure your listings look their best. You can also change how fast it scrolls, and you can include as many items as you like – up to 50. The best thing about it? It's free. What have you got to lose?

INSTANTFEEDBACK

www.merlinsoftware.com/instantfeedback

★★★★☆

\$19.95 (£13.19 approx); 15-day trial

PC

Feedback management is undeniably a major admin headache for eBay sellers, and InstantFeedback may just be the pill for the job.

It's a small and simple program that sits in the Windows System Tray, waiting and watching for feedback activity on your eBay account. When positive feedback is found, it can automatically generate positive feedback in return, reciprocating the actions of your buyers as well as sending along a thank you email message.

If you have a lot of feedback to catch up on, the program can help with that too by producing a list of those needing your comments and can also request feedback from customers who have yet to give their opinions.

InstantFeedback will also alert you to any neutral or negative feedback received, so you can make amends should you need to.

Feedback tools are very welcome, yet surprisingly few are to be found considering the value and cost of good and bad comments. InstantFeedback is recommended to those who prefer an installed tool that's updated often by its creator.

JUST SHIP IT

www.justshipit.co.uk



Subscription – £29.99 monthly, £149.99 one year; three-day trial PC – Windows XP or later

Taking care of shipping labels is just a small part of the after-sales tasks you need to perform when using eBay and running your own business. There are invoices, posting items and keeping an audited list of all your sold items. This can be a headache, but Just Ship IT could help.

This app aims to take care of everything, from producing shipping labels (which you can customise), to invoices and keeping tabs on previous sales. It'll even download your listing information from eBay, storing it in one easy-to-access place.

Shipping labels can include images, such as your company logo, as well as postage paid impressions, should you use this for easy posting. Likewise, invoices are fully customisable.

The history of sold items is a big help to anyone wishing for an easier time keeping track of orders, and all details can be printed off for archiving.

Just Ship IT is a very useful tool, but at £149.99 per year to use the service, it's not cheap, especially as there are both cheaper and free alternatives that accomplish the same thing.

LABEL WIZARD

www.ledset.com/labwiz



\$19.95 (approx £13.19); 45-day trial PC

Printing your own shipping labels via a dedicated label-making program doesn't just save time; it also adds an element of professionalism to your sales. It also gives you the chance to include details of any other websites or stores that you may run, further extending the potential for sales.

Label Wizard, like many label-making programs, enables you to create your own custom labels for use on your packages to be shipped. All you need to do is enter the customer's details and you're away. Using the more advanced features, you can also add images to labels, as well as business-card-like footers, containing your company logo and any other details.

Using the program is easy and adding extra info and images is a breeze. Printing works with all the most popular label formats and you can perform a search for any previous labels, so you can quickly print labels for repeat customers.

Label Wizard isn't free (and it's quite old, with no update to the software we could see over the past few years), but it does provide some great label customisation and the ability to advertise your services with every sale.

MERCHANTRUN GLOBALLINK 3.0

www.merchantrun.com



**From \$29.99 to \$374.99 (£19.20 to £240.11 approx) plus 1% of sales, which reduces with plan scales and volume
Online service**

While most casual eBay users will be content with selling the odd item once in a while through their country's eBay incarnation, more advanced, larger-scale sellers may not be so easily pleased. For some, an adequate portion of the market isn't simply with their native eBay and getting their listings placed internationally is key. This is where MerchantRun GlobalLink comes in.

With this service you can simultaneously upload listings to 21 eBay sites all over the world. This process includes category translations, currency conversion, cross promotions, prebuilt templates and image hosting. The translation services alone will make it essential to many, making this a very interesting selling application to consider.

MerchantRun can also automatically relist items (including relist to store), and it can also keep a fixed number of listings active and list according to a preset schedule.

The ability to list items to 21 different international eBay sites is a huge bonus to anyone wishing to expand beyond their borders, and for sellers with truly international aspirations, this is a great tool to have close to hand.

Commissions are based on the item sale price only, and they don't

include shipping, unlike other percentage-based offers – a detail often overlooked when choosing services.

PAYLOADZ

www.payloadz.com



Free Basic account (1GB storage), various Premium accounts

Online service

Not everything sold on eBay takes the form of physical objects such as collectable figurines, cars, clothes and compact discs. More and more people have opted to use it to sell downloadable software. With eBay being so popular, you're almost guaranteed extra coverage compared to independent sites.

Payloadz is a service that aims to make the sale of electronically distributable items easier for both the seller and the buyer. It works in conjunction with eBay and PayPal, and once payment has been received, it will send a thank you email to the buyer, along with details of where and how to download the software.

Payloadz is a welcome service for small-scale software developers and distributors who need a simple, effective way of peddling their wares. Providing secure file storage using its servers, you can opt to supply downloads or even provide CD copies. The free account can help test the waters for the sale of ebooks and other digital files without long-term commitment.

SELLING MANAGER

goo.gl/i2f78



Free, or \$15.99 (£10.57 approx) for the Pro version.

Online service

Are you an eBay seller? Then congratulations – you qualify to use eBay's Selling Manager tool. Anyone who does a decent amount of business through eBay should take advantage of it. For starters, the basic version is free, which is always a good start.

In Selling Manager, you can see all your recent listings at a glance. Status columns show you what you've done and what you need to do next, so if you've had a lot of auctions finish in a short space of time, Selling Manager will cut through any confusion about what you need to do next and help you keep on top of your customers. It's even got tools to help you print invoices and labels – in bulk, if necessary.

The Pro version offers a few extra features: it can automatically relist items if necessary, or it can automatically provide feedback for buyers who have paid, which is really handy if you regularly sell through eBay and don't want to have to keep logging in to leave positive feedback for your latest customers. Selling Manager Pro also has some decent analytics features, which can help you see which of your products makes you the most profit.

The Pro version does cost money – \$15.99 a month, to be exact – but if you're a Premium or Anchored Store subscriber, you get it free as part of your eBay membership.

SIXBIT

www.sixbitsoftware.com



**From \$19.99 (£13.21 approx.) per month
PC only**

If Selling Manager isn't for you, SixBit might be what you're looking for. Like eBay's own tool, SixBit has a few different

tiers available, and which version you want depends on how much you tend to sell through eBay. The most basic version is the Home and Hobby Edition, and as the name suggests, it's for people using eBay just as a hobby. The software can help make listings and emails look good with helpful templates and can also automate some basic tasks like leaving feedback and changing item info.

The next level up is the Small Business edition, which can be used by multiple employees, offers some photo editing tools and can generate packing lists and carrier labels. Beyond that, there's an Enterprise Edition, which packs in sales analysis tools on top of everything else; both of the business versions can schedule listings on eBay in advance, which is something you'd normally have to pay for separately.

If you've got an eye on turning eBay sales into your career, this could be a really helpful program – and there's a free 30-day trial available so you don't have to commit to anything to find out if it suits you.

TIME LEFT

www.nestersoft.com



**Free (Deluxe version also available, for \$24.95, £16.49 approx.)
PC**

eBay and time go hand in hand and TimeLeft is a little application that's more than aware of this. Its purpose in life is to make sure that you don't miss out on anything because you weren't watching the clock!

It's not an application specifically designed with eBay in mind, as it has lots of other

functions to it. It can serve as a stopwatch, for instance or a countdown. It then appears on your screen in a small, floating box and you get the necessary reminders when you want them.

However, there is an auction side to it, courtesy of an AuctionWatch function that's been built into the program. It's quite a nifty idea too. You basically tell it what auctions you want to watch and TimeLeft will keep an eye on how long is left for them.

This is a useful tool for both buyers and sellers, and TimeLeft doesn't just display an indication of time, but it'll also tell you who the current high bidder in a certain auction is, as well as the current price. This information isn't presented in a massively attractive way, but it is functional and it is useful.

There's nothing earth-shatteringly complex about TimeLeft, but then there doesn't need to be. It's a simple tool to do a simple but very useful job. And it's hard to grumble at just how well it does it.

Management Software

ATANDRA T-HUB

www.atandra.com



From \$450 (£297 approx) to \$900 (£595 approx); other fees also apply.

PC (MS Access and QuickBooks software required)

If you're running a serious business either solely through eBay or with eBay making up a part of your operation, then you'll no doubt need to keep track of your orders, including sales figures, card payments,

shipping costs and so on. Doing this manually is no small task, and even if with accounting software, getting your eBay info into it can be tricky.

T-Hub is a special tool that's designed to effortlessly transport data from your online store into the popular QuickBooks software. It'll handle order management, credit card processing and shipping with just a few clicks and should help to streamline the whole process.

T-Hub is a very useful tool for advanced, larger-scale sellers, but it's not for most eBay sellers. It's expensive and, of course, requires QuickBooks to function.

AUCTION BLOX

www.auctionblox.com



Prices available on request
Online service (server-based)

AuctionBlox isn't a stand-alone solution for selling items on eBay. Instead, it integrates with osCommerce shopping carts, as a means of selling through eBay and a store or website.

All the standard, must-have capabilities common among seller tools are present such as invoicing, emailing and shipping help.

AuctionBlox automates listing chores like relisting of unsold items and immediate listing of new items on the close of successful sales. Also, the notification process for winning bids, feedback and other communication is streamlined as well.

More advanced features are available in the form of Checkout Redirect, which can generate 'upselling' opportunities by enabling sellers to view additional items you have for sale, as they're stepped through the payment process. This has obvious benefits to sellers but also offers buyers savings on shipping of their combined purchases. An Inventory

Management feature monitors stock, cancelling eBay auctions when items are depleted in shops to avoid overselling.

There's a wealth of help available for installing and getting to grips with the software, including a wiki, a community forum and even a feature request form via the website. However, at last visit, AuctionBlox has discontinued free trials (although they may be started again at any time), and the software looks complex enough to warrant a no-fee dry run before a long-term investment, especially as hosting services (for online storage of the software) aren't included in the Standard price package, but only with the Gold, Platinum and Enterprise editions.

AUCTION WIZARD 2000

www.auctionwizard2000.com



\$50 (£33.01 approx) per year;
60-day free trial
PC

Some of the best software was developed to fill a need, rather than as a commercial effort, and if it's especially good it often reaches other customers by knowing just what the user wants firsthand.

Such is the case with Auction Wizard 2000, a very fully featured seller management package that was originally designed by the owners to sell estate assets through eBay, and it includes the tools that proved most helpful.

Choose from among dozens of included customisable listing templates, for professional pages without any previous experience of HTML and select, resize, upload and remove images, all from within the same program.

A powerful database doesn't just sit there, holding onto your figures. You can generate equally powerful and useful reports for full control

over financial decisions and directions. A built-in ledger tracks income and expenses and data can be imported or exported in CSV format for use in numerous software titles. You can import data from any supported auction site and backup and restore tools – essential to your peace of mind – are included as well as a purge and archive utility to keep all your vital records relevant and tidy.

Inventory management and invoicing are covered, and there's unlimited support for multiple User IDs. Email is produced automatically at each stage of the auction process.

With built-in image-editing capabilities and email, FTP and HTML modules, it's an all-inclusive package that goes beyond typical management software and more than justifies the price, eliminating the need for separate software to handle those tasks and consolidating work into one program rather than across many.

The maker claims owners recoup the cost of the software through the quick relisting feature alone, with reduced fees for second-shot listings of unsold items.

Multiple users working across a network are supported, although each workstation requires a separate licence, but it's good to know the software can grow with you as you grow your business. With 60 days to trial the package, there's plenty of time to try it.

Miscellaneous Software

EBAY LISTING ANALYTICS

www.listinganalytics.com



Free
PC/Mac

This one's an official product from eBay itself, and it's been made available entirely free of charge.

The idea behind it is quite simple too: using the software, you can get an added insight into just how many people are clicking onto your eBay listings and what they're doing when they get there.

Even at a base level, it's an interesting piece of work. However, if you're a dedicated eBay, Listing Analytics provides invaluable intelligence. For instance, using the software, you can find out quite easily what your best and worst performing listings are. You can also find out where your buyers are coming from and find how, effectively, what they do when they land on your listings page.

All of this is really useful information, but there's still more to what Listing Analytics can do for you. Perhaps the most valuable feature here is the one that lets you search for a listing keyword, so you can find out where it'll appear in eBay's search results. If you're the kind of trader who frequently gets frustrated that, no matter what you try, your listing seems to get hidden away behind everyone else's, then being able to do this kind of search before you've committed to sell something is really quite important. You can quite easily use the information you glean to shape a much better, keyword-focused listing at the end of it all.

Some have noted that the work it does is simply common sense, and there is some substance to that criticism. Of course, not everyone's an eBay expert and if you follow what Listing Analytics demonstrates, then you can learn a lot from it and hopefully enjoy more sales in the process. The fact that there's no charge attached at least means there's no obvious risk involved in giving it a try.

INKFROG

www.inkfrog.com

★★★★☆

\$9.95 (£5.89 approx.) per month for a starter account; up to \$34.95 (£20.70 approx) per month.

Any larger-scale eBay seller knows that it's important to keep accurate tabs on all of your items and auctions, and having a useful management tool to aid you is imperative. Therefore, a program like InkFrog is just the ticket.

InkFrog is a long-established management tool that allows eBay users to control and keep track of all their items from a single, easy-to-use system. The program stores and lists all your current listings, including updated 'time left' information and current bids, and it will also catalogue all previous sales too.

You can use the program to upload new listings using the interface, and it comes with a selection of prebuilt templates that can make your items look even better and more attractive to potential buyers. Of course, you can also use your own custom templates should you prefer. The listing tool is billed as a 'one-step' system and does make listing items far easier. You can also create stored profiles, which you can quickly select and apply to items. This makes listing multiple items a breeze.

As well as the management tool, it also comes with 1GB of image hosting, which is useful for eBay sellers who need to supply higher-resolution images of their wares.

With such large image hosting space and powerful inventory and listing management tools, this is a great option for power sellers. And it's now available free of charge for up to 25 listings a year.

KYOZOU

www.kyozou.com

★★★★☆

Price on request; demo available Online service

Kyozou is an online auction management tool that contains a range of aids to allow eBay sellers to manage their business from a web browser, without the need for locally installed software. This effectively means you can run your business from any computer with an internet, anywhere in the world.

The service includes support for inventory management, communications with buyers, payment collection, shipping tools and support not only for eBay, but also for other outlets such as Amazon. You can create your own marketplace, provide ample support for customer feedback and even use the tool to manage any employees.

The web-based service delves into every area of online sales and is an impressive tool that sellers will be able to use to capitalise on their business.

TERAPEAK

www.terapeak.co.uk

★★★★☆

£19.96 per month

Online service

Terapeak is for eBay sellers who are really determined to make a living off the site: it's a detailed analysis tool that can provide all sorts of insight into eBay, so sellers can see how well their listings are performing and also figure out what kinds of things their customers might be looking for. It uses data on various different aspects of eBay to help users make the most of their time on the site, looking at keywords, price trends and even product research. That means the serious seller can make sure

they're using the same terms as their customers, to make sure their listings appear on the screens of the people who want them and also that they can make sure their pricing is appealing – and better than the competition!

If you just want to clear out your attic or sell some crafts as a hobby, you probably don't need this tool. But if you're a power seller and do a lot of trading on the site, it might be able to give you valuable data that'll help you make more money. And, as there so often is, there's a free trial (just seven days' worth, though), so you can try before you buy.

TOOLHAUS

www.toolhaus.org

★★★★☆

Free

Online service

The incredibly basic look of the Toolhaus website is deceptive – it can be an incredibly useful tool. A series of search boxes allow you to search for feedback left for and by eBay users, which again sounds simple until you need to use it. Using the various tools Toolhaus offers, you can check for negative and neutral feedback left for a seller or you can enter two different eBay IDs to check what kind of feedback they've left for one another. This can be particularly useful if you suspect something strange is going on with a user's feedback.

Clicking through pages and pages of feedback on eBay itself can be exhausting, but Toolhaus makes it easy to see at a glance what's going on. It's less useful than it used to be since now eBay will let you jump directly to a user's negative or neutral feedback, but there are still some searches Toolhaus can help with that eBay doesn't offer, so it's worth checking out.

AND FINALLY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The eBay FAQ

To finish off, a recap of some of the most asked questions surrounding eBay

Now it's time to round things off with a look at some of the common questions that emerge regarding eBay. Many of these were covered in more detail earlier on, but the following four pages are, nonetheless, a useful quick reference guide to some of the more common questions that pop up...

BUYER TIPS

Is eBay safe, and will I get a good deal?

Yes, it's generally safe to buy on eBay, but it pays to employ a bit of common sense. Something that's too good to be true is generally too good to be true, and sellers with lots of negative feedback tend to have that for a reason. Sellers, too, who try to circumnavigate the eBay system and approach you directly should be treated with a degree of caution.

Yet the truth remains that millions of transactions are conducted on eBay every year, the vast majority of which go without a hitch. Are you going to get a good deal? Again, that depends on how good a shopper you are! It certainly pays not to get carried away with the euphoria of bidding, which often ends

up with you feeling like you've won something, rather than bought something, at the end of a furious bidding war. Compare the eBay price to other outlets, set yourself a strict bidding limit, observe it, and you should be able to seek out some very fine deals.

Do watch out for the likes of postage charges, though, and remember to factor them in.

Should I bid on an item if someone has a poor feedback rating?

It's not a good idea, in general, and should absolutely be avoided on high-value items. If you can't afford to potentially lose the money on the item, then don't bid.

If it's a low-value item that you're keen on, then by all means read the specific feedback and make a judgment based on that. Also, if the seller is local, it might be worth seeing if you can pick an item up in person, which will get round potential problems.

Ultimately, though, the feedback system is there for a reason, and while all eBay purchases have an implicit level of risk, bidding with a low-rated seller enhances the chances that something will go wrong.

How can I be sure a buyer will receive the item I send?

Short of putting it in their hands yourself, you can't. However, there are some precautions you can take.

Firstly, for higher-value items, use a trackable form of postage, one that has insurance built into it to cover any potential losses should your item go astray. Also, if it's trackable, your delivery company will be able to tell you if an item has been signed for or not. Royal Mail offers tracking services, as do other courier firms, whose fees may not be as prohibitive as you may at first assume.

Even for low-ticket items, it's worth getting a certificate of postage from your local Post Office, which at least gives you some small comeback should your item go missing.



The onus is firmly on you to ensure that the item concerned arrives with the buyer, and if it fails to do so, you will have to issue a refund.

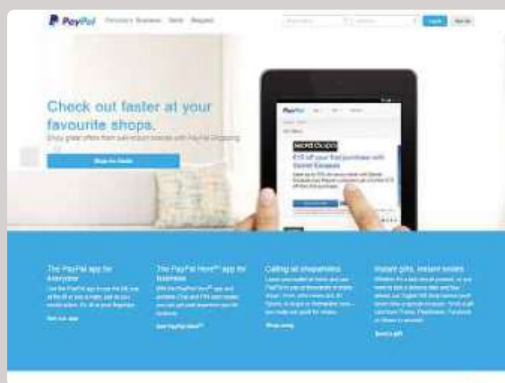
DID YOU KNOW?

eBay UK was launched in October 1999, four years after it was launched in the USA.

Should I pay with PayPal?

eBay all but forces you to, and it certainly gives you a level of protection, although it's far from perfect. On bigger items, it certainly makes sense to use the PayPal service, because in the event of a problem, its own dispute channel is generally the most effective way to get your money back.

You should certainly avoid payment methods such as cash and bank transfer (both of which leave you no recourse if something goes wrong, and are regularly exploited by fraudsters), and Western Union transfers should also set off loud alarm bells in your head.



Can I trust a high seller rating?

You can certainly take confidence from it, but again, for high-value items, it's worth doing just a bit more work. If, for instance, somebody is selling a £2,000 television, but all that seller's feedback is from people who have bought 1p e-books, then that should instantly raise alarm bells. The more homework you do (and you can click through and find out recent transactions that a seller has been involved in), the safer you will be.

That said, there's always a chance that things will go wrong. However, sellers with very high ratings and large quantities of transactions are invariably the safest to go with.

An item has arrived, and it's not as the seller described. What should I do?

Contact the seller immediately, but do so through eBay's communication channels, rather than private email. That way, there's a communication trail, which, should you need to escalate the dispute, can be easily referred to. Most problems are easily resolved this way.

You need to detail exactly how the item differs from the description, and take photographs to back up your claims. Do not start using the item. Tell the seller you want a refund or a part refund if you still want to hang on to the item. If you don't hear back from them within 72 hours, then start a dispute with eBay and PayPal (if you paid with the latter). Again, keep the details clear, and include photographic evidence where appropriate. Tell eBay that the item was Significantly Not As Described.



I've won an auction, but the seller won't sell the item. What should I do?

This sometimes happens if an item, for instance, has sold for less than the seller had hoped for, but it's still a clear breach of eBay's terms and conditions. Send the seller an email asking them to supply the item or else you'll have no option but to report them to eBay.

Should you not receive a satisfactory response or any reply at all, then raise a dispute with eBay for non-supplying of goods. You should also leave them negative feedback. However, if someone doesn't want to sell you something, then no matter how hard you push them, you won't ultimately be able to get it. It's best, once feedback has been left and the matter reported, to chalk it up to experience and move on.

Someone has approached me about an item and asked if I want to buy it outside of the eBay system. What should I do?

There's a clear advantage to conducting a transaction outside of eBay, given that it would save on both eBay and PayPal fees, which can ultimately be to the benefit of both parties. However, not only is this a

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

BECKHAM'S FOOTBALL



The football used by David Beckham when he famously missed a penalty in Euro 2004 against Portugal went for £18,700. The seller claimed he was sitting in Row Z when he caught the ball.

AND FINALLY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

practice that eBay frowns on, it's a case of the risks far outweighing the advantages.

You lose the protection that eBay and PayPal offer on transactions, and should something go wrong with a deal, then you're likely to be left high and dry. Clearly, eBay will not intervene in a problematic transaction that's taken place outside of its walls. It's thus recommended to refuse any such offer that a seller may approach you with.

SELLER TIPS

My auction has ended, but I haven't heard from the buyer. What should I do?

As soon as an auction ends, it's a good idea to send an invoice through the eBay system as soon as possible. If you don't hear from your buyer after a week or so, then something clearly has gone wrong. As usual, try the common-sense approach first: try to contact the buyer again and, if necessary, inform them that you'll have to go through eBay's reporting channels.

After seven days, you can file a report for a non-paying bidder with eBay (or you can do it instantly if the buyer has since left the eBay service and no longer has an account). If you still hear nothing back after a further seven days, you can at least claim your final value fees back (although you'll still be liable for any listing extras you bought, as well as the listing fee itself). To do this, you need to close your case with



eBay within 60 days of the end of the auction. If you fail to do this, then eBay will not refund you.

Sadly, the eBay system doesn't allow you to leave negative feedback for the buyer concerned, thanks to controversial changes in the feedback system that were implemented in 2008. Those changes still rankle.

I've sold an item, but the buyer has left me negative feedback unfairly. What can I do?

Feedback can be mutually withdrawn if both parties agree, yet if your buyer steadfastly refuses to do so, then, unfortunately, you're stuck with it. At the very least, though, it's worth replying to the feedback to state your case. This will appear alongside the

It seems to cost a lot of money to sell my item. What am I doing wrong?

Quite possibly nothing. However, it's important not to get carried away when putting together your listing. Only choose the extras that will genuinely help and enhance your listing, for instance, and be wary of overspending on low-ticket items. Be aware of the final value fee eBay will take at the end of your auction (10%, up to a maximum of £75), and adjust your pricing accordingly. There's little point allowing bids to start at 1p, when it's an item that you won't feel the financial benefit of until bidding reaches £20.

Don't discount using specialised alternatives to eBay either, depending on the item you're looking to sell. For example, with a second-hand car, there are many outlets through which you might get a better ultimate price, once charges have been taken.

However, the best tip is this: be aware of what it's costing you to list your item, choose your listing enhancements with care and set your pricing at a realistic level. You are, after all, getting your item in front of millions of potential buyers by listing it on eBay!



DID YOU KNOW?

According to Alan Bamberger of ArtBusiness.com, eBay's main problem is that "no one is minding the store". He said, "Quality controls, human interventions, built-in safeguards or any other filtering mechanisms are virtually non-existent."

I've sold an item, and the buyer has now revealed that their address is outside of Europe. What should I do?

If you didn't list worldwide shipping in your listing, then you can refuse the sale. You should certainly do so if your buyer is located in one of the many hotspots for online scams – Nigerian, Thai and Indonesian addresses are notorious, for instance. If in doubt, it's best in these instances to not send your item out, as your chances of getting payment that won't bounce are much lower than usual, and also the chance of hearing from your buyer once a problem arises is virtually non-existent.



feedback on your transaction that future bidders will see, so you at least get to state your side of the story. However, as noted earlier, you can't leave a reciprocal piece of negative feedback. Not surprisingly, this is not one of eBay's most popular policies, and you may end up having to simply dust yourself down and move on.

When should I post an item?

The ideal answer is when payment has cleared. With the likes of PayPal, that's straightforward, because you're informed when a payment has been made. If you must proceed with a bank transfer – and this is only recommended for traders you have some trust in – then again, allow three to four working days.

Cheques are trickier. When payment clears in this case varies from bank to bank, and even from cheque to cheque! Even when funds appear on a bank statement, that doesn't necessarily mean that a

cheque has fully cleared, and said funds can still potentially be pulled. You can ring your bank if it's a high-value cheque for guidance, but it's likely to recommend four working days at least or perhaps even a couple of weeks.

Depending on your own financial situation, you might find it good practice to ship before this process is complete on lower-value items. At the very least, you need to advise your buyer throughout the process, and ideally list in your original auction that you will require a cheque to have cleared before you'll ship the goods.

SECURITY

I've had an email from eBay asking me to confirm my account details. What should I do?

Ignore it. This is what's known as a phishing scam, where unscrupulous criminals will try to direct you to a plausible-looking eBay site. The problem? It's more than likely a fake designed to get your login details and password. Once a phisher has those, then they can log into your account and potentially get access to your financial details too, as well as conduct fraudulent activity.

If in any doubt, don't click on the links in such an email, and send it directly to eBay for analysis. It generally comes back to you quite quickly to let you know whether it's a fake or not.

AND FINALLY

eBay isn't the be all and end all, but used properly and intelligently, it can be a great source of bargains, and a good way to make some pocket money. Keep your expectations realistic, know when to walk away, and keep an eye on all the hidden costs. Happy bidding!

MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

WHALE 'RIGHTS'



A conservation group sold the 'rights' to a whale's various body parts on eBay. The World Society for the Protection of Animals hoped to raise £95,000, the value of the meat from a fin whale, which they would then pass on to Icelandic hunters in return for leaving the whale alone.



MEMORABLE EBAY AUCTIONS

THE MEANING OF LIFE

Philosophers have argued about the meaning of life for centuries, but an optimistic eBay seller claimed he'd worked it out and tried to sell it. Buyers were unimpressed. It attracted only eight bids and sold for just \$3.26.



THE INDEPENDENT GUIDE TO EBAY 2016

Editors:

Sarah Dobbs, Anthony Enticknap and
Simon Brew

Design & Layout:

Laura Jane Gunnion and Laura Passmore

Digital Production Manager:

Nicky Baker

MANAGEMENT

Magbook Publisher:

Dharmesh Mistry

Operations Director:

Robin Ryan

Managing Director of Advertising:

Julian Lloyd-Evans

Newstrade Director:

David Barker

Chief Operating Officer:

Brett Reynolds

Group Finance Director:

Ian Leggett

Chief Executive:

James Tye

Chairman: Felix Dennis



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20 7907 6132 or e-mail ryan_chambers@
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